

196.
Read the Opening Chapters of the Two New Serial Stories
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"MISS DORIS, IS IT POSSIBLE!" EXCLAIMED DR. GORDON.

A GREY DAWN.

—301—

CHAPTER I.

MAJOR WARD had a large family, small means, and a very ambitious managing wife. But for the last item, perhaps the means would not have seemed so very small. He had retired on "half-pay," and possessed something of his own, so that his income altogether was five hundred a year, besides the pleasant, old-fashioned country house which was his for life, after which it passed to his daughter, a pretty brown-eyed girl, the darling of her father's heart, although she was in perpetual revolt against the lady who now bore the Major's name, and who on her part had very little regard for her step-daughter.

Major Ward was a pleasant, kind-hearted man, but deplorably weak; he let his wife govern him in most things, because it saved him the trouble

of opposing her; he suffered her to attempt a style of life beyond his means, which entailed hard work on herself, and much private pinching, because he had found out her temper was alarming when she did not have her own way.

For the rest he spent many hours in his garden, grew roses and strawberries which were the admiration of the neighbourhood, smoked a pipe with an old friend now and then by way of relaxation, adored his first born, Marjory, and petted the second brood while they remained children, quite content to turn them over to their mother's guidance when they grew out of a love for lolly-pops and grubbing.

Not a grand character or a very praiseworthy one you see, and yet there was a simple kindness about the Major which endeared him to all his friends, and even his energetic managing wife admitted that "Edward had the sweetest temper in the world."

It was a summer's day, and old king Sol had

been lavish of his presence, so that the weather was perfect.

Mrs. Ward had departed to a garden party at a neighbouring baronet's, carrying her husband in tow; Marjory was to have been of the party, but at the last moment she had flatly refused to enter the carriage, and Mrs. Ward, much incensed, had driven off without her.

It was five o'clock, and no doubt indoors tea was going on in the school-room; but Marjory made not the least attempt to re-enter the house. She sat in a little rustic arbour beyond the flower garden, and she was expressing her opinion of things in general with all the frankness of youth.

"I don't care, Doris," she cried, passionately, "I would do just the same again; we are just like sisters, we couldn't love each other better if we were twins, and I won't be taken about by Mrs. Ward here, there, and everywhere while you are left at home to drudge like a nursemaid with those wretched children."

The other girl, she had such a pretty wistful face, with big grey eyes looked up tenderly into Marjory's face.

"I know you love me," she said, gratefully, "and I can bear anything while I have you left; but oh, Marjory, isn't it hard papa should have married a woman like Mrs. Ward? If mother had lived things would have been so different."

They were not sisters these two girls, who both called Major Ward "papa," and spoke of his dead wife as "mother"; indeed there was not any tie of kindred between them. It was a sad little story, and would have softened most women's hearts to poor little Doris, but it only hardened Mrs. Ward's.

Long, long ago, when Marjory was a baby, her father's regiment had been stationed in India, and Mrs. Ward had spent one long summer in a remote Scotch village, partly for her little one's health, partly to be near her only sister who had married a hard-working country doctor.

Mr. Meredith had a patient in whom both he and his wife were deeply interested—a girl-wife, who was slowly passing out of life, and whose husband for some unaccountable reason, was unable to be with her, and had never seen his child, the same age exactly as Marjory Ward.

There was no sign of poverty about Mrs. West; indeed, she seemed to have ample means. She herself would not hear a word against her husband, but was always making excuses for him; he was so busy, he could not get away, etc.

At last the end came quite suddenly, and the man who had never found time to visit his dying wife came north for the funeral.

To do Mr. West justice, he seemed broken-hearted; he declared he had had no idea of his wife's danger; he was a frank, outspoken young fellow, and he poured out his story to Mr. Meredith as though they had been old friends.

He was not rich, but he had great expectations from a maiden aunt, who wished, however, to marry him to a *protégée* of her own. It was the fear of offending this aunt which had made him keep his marriage secret. What he would not risk for his wife's sake he would not brave for an unconscious infant; indeed he seemed to have almost an aversion to his own child, whom he declared had cost her mother's life.

Asked what he intended to do with Baby Doris, he declared she must be placed at nurse; he supposed some decent woman in the village would undertake the charge.

But Mrs. Ward was indignant at the bare idea; she was a large-souled, generous creature, and with the thought of her own child at her heart she was very pitiful for little Doris. Finally she offered Mr. West to take the little girl and bring her up as Marjory's sister, until such time as her father could claim her, an offer which was rapturously accepted.

At the time Mrs. Ward thought her charge would only last two or three years; but to her surprise Mr. West made no attempt to resume his fatherly duties. He sent handsome presents to the baby for some years, chiefly in the form of money; then, when Doris was about three years old, his letters ceased, and no more was heard of him.

By then both Mrs. Ward and her husband were too fond of Doris to part from her. No other children had come, and the two little girls were brought up in all things as sisters. Possessing a small property of her own, Marjory Ward felt no doubt, that her husband could not reproach her with the expense of little Doris.

It was a happy, united household, and if only the gentle mistress had lived till the girls grew up no trouble would have come to her adopted child.

Alas! in this world things do not happen as one would wish. Mrs. Ward died when the girls were about ten, and her husband, declaring himself broken-hearted, exchanged into a regiment stationed in India, leaving Marjory and Doris in Scotland with his wife's brother and sister.

In those days Doris never knew the secret of her parentage, but believed herself Marjory's sister. The kindly couple in Scotland never disturbed this belief. The girls grew up happy and free in the fresh, open country. Their uncle and aunt engaged an excellent governess for

them, and but for the loss of their mother they would have had nothing to wish for.

Then came the news of the Major's (he had got his promotion) second marriage.

Mr. and Mrs. Meredith were troubled but not surprised; they knew Edward Ward's character too well to think him capable of fidelity to the dead.

The second Mrs. Ward presented her husband with a baby every year or so, but resolutely declined to leave the Major in India when it was suggested it was time the little ones were sent to England; so an old friend of his having died opportunistly and left him Riverside for life, Major Ward retired on half pay and returned to England accompanied by his Julia and half-a-dozen children.

They settled themselves at Riverside, which fully equalled their expectations, only the lady thought it monstrous it should descend to Marjory instead of her own son Bob; however, the Major pointed out Mr. Pemberton was Marjory's godfather, and had made his will before Bob was born, which appeased her, and she began to discuss the subject of the two girls return.

"With our narrow means it's no use your paying their uncle for keeping them; two girls can't cost a hundred and fifty pounds a year."

"It's Marjory's own money," said the Major; "it was her mother's fortune, and the settlement directs that if she does not live at home a hundred and fifty pounds should be paid for her to any guardian I appoint, until she marries."

"Haven't Doris any money?" asked his wife, shortly. "I never heard of one girl taking all when she has a twin sister."

And then the truth came out. The Major confessed Doris was not his daughter, and had not the least claim on him.

Mrs. Ward was furious; she declared she would never receive the girl at Riverside. With seven children of his own it was wicked of the Major to adopt a beggar's brat, and so on. But when her husband seemed quite satisfied for both girls to remain in Scotland, and to continue his allowance for them, Mrs. Ward changed her cue. After all, she said, Riverside was Marjory's rightful home, and she must not grow up a stranger to it. For her sake Doris should be welcomed.

So the girls came home, and their departure left Mr. Meredith free to take a post in a distant country, whose mild climate he hoped would be beneficial to his wife. He loved both Marjory and Doris dearly; had he even guessed at the life before the latter he would never have given her up.

Mrs. Ward waited a little while before she showed herself in her true colours; waited until the Merediths had started for the East, and the novelty of the girls' return had worn off; then gradually she began. By little and little she worked her way, until now, a year after she had left Scotland, Doris knew the story of her birth perfectly, and was quite used to being treated as a dependent, while she was made decidedly useful, filling a rôle not very different from that of nursery-maid.

Marjory was furious. She from the first had hated her step-mother; there were frequent scenes between them, but Marjory found that in the matter of Doris she was perfectly powerless.

Mrs. Ward declared she could not afford to keep Doris West in idleness. When Marjory offered to pay for her friend's board she was told she "had no money but what was really her father's."

An appeal to the Major was in vain. He, poor man, never said an unkind word to Doris; but he was beginning to feel (through having the statement dinned into his ears) that his first wife's generous freak had cost him a great deal of money, and that if the girl could repay a tithe of what had been spent on her by teaching his little children it was only her duty to do so.

"Your mother was young and impulsive," he told Marjory, "she never dreamed when she took charge of Mrs. West's baby for a while that the child would be left on our hands for life. Besides, my first wife had two hundred and fifty pounds a year of her own, and only one child. I

am far poorer than I was in your mother's lifetime, and I have seven children."

"Will you let us go away?" pleaded Marjory, sadly; "you have your wife and the little ones. Doris and I could live quite happily on the sum you need to pay my uncle."

"Not to be thought of. You must stay here, and go out with my wife. You are a very pretty girl, Marjory, and I expect you to make a grand match."

Marjory was not quite convinced. She carried the question to an old lawyer, who had been a trusted friend of her mother's, and still managed the Major's affairs.

"My dear little girl," he said, gravely, "you can't do anything. Until you marry your father has the right to decide where you live. As for Miss West, I am very sorry for her; but your step-mother is right on two points. She has not your parents a great deal of money, and the Major is not rich. You will have five thousand pounds the day you marry, and, at your father's death, Riverside. Thus you are, in a small way, an heiress. Miss West will have nothing in the world."

"But Mrs. Ward makes her work like a servant," objected Marjory, eagerly.

"If she had to earn her living among strangers would she be any happier?" asked the lawyer, gravely; "here, at least, she has your companionship. Marjory, my dear, try and look at things justly. You can't expect Mrs. Ward to feel towards Doris as you do; once admit the poor child must earn her bread, and then things won't seem so bad."

But they did. Marjory, bitterly indignant, was always fighting Doris's battles, thereby (it must be confessed) often making things rather worse for her adopted sister, until at last what had only been coolness on Mrs. Ward's part became a positive dislike, and even the Major would have been heartily glad to get rid of the grey-eyed girl, whose sad, wistful face always seemed a silent reproach to him.

This afternoon things had come to a climax. The garden party, to which Marjory had just refused to go, was given by Lady Maxwell, of the Beeches, a very intimate friend of Mrs. Ward's, and one of the few people who had taken any notice of Doris West.

In general the visitors at Riverside took the girl at Mrs. Ward's estimate, and treated her as a nursery governess; but Lady Maxwell had made no difference between Marjory and Doris. She had gone out of her way to show the latter kindness, and had expressly included her in the invitation to the fête.

And Doris wished to go. The Beeches was to her just like fairy-land, and she had a warm adoring admiration for the silver-haired old lady who was queen of the beautiful house.

Mrs. Ward objected that Doris had no dress, and she could not afford to buy her one; but Marjory had declared this difficulty could be got over. Up to the very last the girls hoped for success; then one of the little spoilt nursery children (spoilt as only Anglo-Indian little ones are) told her mother Doris had beaten her (a wilful falsehood, by the way), and Mrs. Ward, her gentility and manners alike forgotten in her passion, had dealt the helpless girl a resounding box on the ears, and declared she should stay at home.

Almost beside herself with indignation at the slight to her friend, Marjory declared she would not go to the Beeches without Doris. She kept firm to her resolve. The carriage (hired for the afternoon) drove off without her, and the two girls settled down in the arbour for a good talk over their troubles.

It was natural. Mrs. Ward was a passionate, hard-hearted woman, caring for nothing outside her own children; but still Marjory's vehement partisanship of Doris only made her step-mother hate the girl more.

Riverside was in fact that most undesirable thing—a house divided against itself.

"It's no use," cried Marjory, hotly, "you are my sister, and I will make Mrs. Ward treat you properly."

But the other girl only shook her head.

"She will never do anything but hate me. Oh, Marjio, Marjio, why couldn't I have died when mother did; no one wants me now. I am only a trouble to you!"

"I love you better than anyone in the world," cried Marjio, impulsively, "and you are never to say no one cares for you. As for Mrs. Ward, I hate her!"

"I wish," Doris hesitated, "I knew something about my own father."

Marjio shook her head sorrowfully. Her ideas respecting this unknown father were not flattering ones.

"I wouldn't trouble about him if I were you, dear," she said, tenderly. "He can't be worth your caring for, or he wouldn't have deserted you all these years."

"I suppose," Doris spoke slowly, as though pausing to choose her words, "I suppose he could have found me at any time if he wanted to. I mean, he hasn't been looking for me all the while we have thought him unkind and heartless."

Marjio shook her head decidedly, she was a very practical young person.

"Remember, he had actually seen Uncle David and been to his house. For two or three years he used to write to mother. Still she was always moving about, and he might not have liked to apply to the War Office for father's address; but all these years Uncle David never moved from dear old Hartleigh, and Mr. West could have heard of you in a moment from him."

"Yes," Doris gave a sad, weary little sigh. "I expect you are right; but, Marjio, dear, you can't think how awful it is to belong to no one, to have no creature in the wide world really related to you. Why, I am as much a foundling as the children in that London institution where Uncle David took us one Sunday to hear the singing."

Marjio put her arms round her friend and kissed her, trying in vain to think of some consolation; then blushing crimson she said—

"Only be brave for a little while longer, Doris, darling, and I can take you away. I will never be parted from you, and perhaps in a little while we can leave Riverside together, and be as happy as we were at dear old Hartleigh."

But Doris did not in the least understand her meaning. Even Marjio's blushes did not enlighten her friend.

"Papa will never let you go away," she said, slowly. "And Mrs. Ward told me only the other day he could make you live here until you were married."

"Yes, I think he can, or else you and I could have run away together and set up housekeeping in a little flat like emancipated foundlings; but, Doris, papa's authority only lasts as long as I am Marjio Ward."

A light broke on the other girl.

"Oh, Marjio, do you really mean that you have lost your heart? And I never even suspected it; of course I knew that two or three people admired you very much, but—"

"It isn't one of those you are thinking of," said Marjio, "and he hasn't really said anything yet. Only, Doris, I can't help seeing that he likes coming here, and it can't be to see papa and Mrs. Ward, and yesterday when he was here he told me had a great favour to ask me. I think he would have spoken out then only one of the children interrupted us."

"You mean Lionel Maxwell," said Doris, with a strange little pain at her heart, for Lady Maxwell's nephew had seemed a very knight of olden days to poor lonely Doris. "Oh, Marjio, to think I never guessed it."

"I like him better than anyone I ever saw," said Marjio, "and—I think he cares for me. It would be so nice, Doris. You know he has no near relations except old Lady Maxwell, and she is the dearest old thing, and Doris, it shouldn't make a bit of difference in our friendship, dear. I shall tell him you are just like my sister, and you must live with us."

Doris hesitated. She was painfully conscious that not only was her friend's confidence a surprise to her, but Sir Lionel's manner to Marjio had never seemed in the least lover-like.

"Are you quite sure, Marjio?" she said in a

whisper. "Sir Lionel is older than you are, and—"

"Only six years," said Marjio. "and he is the noblest man I ever met. Oh, yes, I am quite sure of what I shall say when he asks me."

They were interrupted. The trim parlour-maid had come in search of them. She was a servant after Mrs. Ward's own heart, and delighted in showing poor Doris West every little slight and disrespect in her power by way of currying favour with her mistress. She did not dare to be anything but polite to Marjio, though in truth she disliked both the girls.

"Mrs. Marton is in the drawing-room, miss," she said, quietly, "and when I told her the mistress was out she asked to speak to you."

Mrs. Marton was a humble neighbour of the Wards. A gentleman by birth she was very poor. She did the most delicate of needlework and her smocking often appeared on the garments of the little girls in the nursery. Marjio guessed she had come about the payment for some work just finished, and rose at once. She would not make the poor lady's position more painful by making her prefer her request before a third person, so she did not press Doris to accompany her to the house.

"I'll not be long, dear," she said, cheerfully, "sit here till I come back."

CHAPTER II.

LEFT alone Doris West felt she might drop the mask, and give way to the trouble at her heart. Marjio's words to-night had told her of a grief she had never suspected. They had both lost their hearts to the same man—both had given their love to Sir Lionel Maxwell.

"I never thought he would care for me," thought the girl sadly to herself; "he is so far above me; besides, his wife must have an unclouded past, her story must be as open as the day; but oh! it is worse for me that he should marry Marjio than anyone else. If he had gone away after his visit to the Beeches I might have forgotten my folly, but now he will stay a long while, and when he goes it may be only for a little while. Of course, they will be married soon. There is nothing in the world to wait for, and then if Marjio wants me to live with her, I couldn't do it. I would rather go out into the world and beg my bread."

The tears stood in her sweet grey eyes. Doris West was only a girl, she was young even for her years. She hardly knew what love meant, only she was conscious that with the feeling she cherished in her heart for Lionel Maxwell she could not form one of his family circle. If Marjio married him she would lose them both, and Marjio loved him, every tone in her voice proclaimed it. Every word she had said convinced Doris her whole heart was Lionel's.

"He would never care for me," thought the poor child, "but he might for Marjio, she is so bright and lovable, and I think the disappointment would break her heart. Marjio isn't used to trouble, it would kill her."

"All alone, Miss West! Why have you broken your promise to my aunt? I can tell you she is dreadfully disappointed."

The speaker was Lionel Maxwell himself; he had crossed the lawn unnoticed by Doris, and now stood by her side looking anxiously at her sad face and tear-web eyes.

"Why have you forsaken the party?" asked the girl, with an attempt at gaiety. "Lady Maxwell will be in despair."

"Do you think I cared to remain after I knew you were not coming? I waited till I heard Mrs. Ward's explanation to my aunt, and then I took the first opportunity of making my escape."

"What were the explanations?"

"That you were too shy to go into society, and Miss Marjio would not leave you."

"The last was true."

"And not the first?"

"No. Up till two o'clock I hoped to come."

Then Mrs. Ward was angry about something

and said she would not take me. Marjio refused to go without me, and we both stayed away. I was dreadfully sorry."

"It is a cruel shame that Mrs. Ward should treat you as she does. My aunt and I always say so."

"I suppose it is hard on her that her husband should have adopted me," said Doris, simply. "At any rate she would say so."

"I detest Mrs. Ward," said Lionel, frankly.

"She thinks you like her very much. I heard her boast the other day that you never refused her invitations."

"Because it is my only chance of seeing you. Miss West, Doris, don't you know that you are the whole world to me, that I have lingered out at the Beeches solely to be near you?"

And for one moment poor little Doris was happy, blindly, intensely happy. The next she remembered Marjio, Marjio to whom she owed all the affection of her life, Marjio who loved Sir Lionel, too, and confidently expected him to propose to her.

"Don't you know I love you, little one?" asked Sir Lionel, fondly; "didn't some instinct whisper my secret? Why, the first time I ever saw you, when Miss Ward brought me into the hayfield where you were playing with the children, I knew I had met my fate."

"I thought it was Marjio," stammered poor Doris.

"I never loved Marjio Ward as I love you," he answered, gravely; "but I admire her very much; she is good and true, sweet, and womanly. Perhaps if I had never met you I might have cared for her; indeed, I fancy I should have mistaken friendship for love, and asked her to be my wife; but now I know the truth, you, and you only, have won my heart."

"And I can never marry you," said Doris, white to the very lips, but calm and steadfast in her resolution, that come what might she would be loyal to her friend. "Indeed, indeed, Sir Lionel, I am not ungrateful, but I can never be your wife."

"You mean you care for some else," he said, anxiously, "and yet I have never heard your name linked with anyone's."

"There is no one else; but you must have heard Mrs. Ward's account of my history."

Sir Lionel winced; proud of his old name and his long descent the mystery which hung over his sweetheart's parentage was a terrible blow to him, only his love was stronger than his pride.

"Dearest, no one shall ever slight you; no one shall ever remember the past when once you are my wife. Besides, Doris, the world only knows you as Major Ward's adopted daughter. There is no shadow on your name."

"Mrs. Ward would enlighten everyone," said Doris; "apart from her jealousy of my place here, she positively hates me. If you married me she would never rest until my story, with embellishments, was in everyone's mouth."

"What does it matter, dear, so that I have you?" But there was a strange, worried look on his face which belied his words.

"Only I have my pride, too," said Doris; "and I think if disgrace came, and I found out you repented our marriage, I should die of grief and shame. You think you love me now, Sir Lionel, but some day you will be thankful to me for refusing you."

"Doris," he entreated, "do not part us for a mere scruple like that."

But Doris was firm. In spite of all Sir Lionel's entreaties she never wavered in her refusal. It was for Marjio's sake—for the girl who had been a sister to her all her life, she dashed the cup of happiness away from her own lips.

"I will never forgive you!" cried Lionel Maxwell, passionately. "Why did you lead me on only to reject me at last? Why did you make me love you when you meant to cast me aside like a worn-out glove?"

They parted in anger and sorrow. The anger was on his side. He did not like being refused by a portionless girl who was Mrs. Ward's little unpaid drudge. If he did not mind the sacrifice, if he was willing to stoop from his high estate to marry Doris West, she ought to have accepted

him promptly and been properly grateful for the honour he had done her.

He was gone at last. Doris felt as if she had gone through a terrible ordeal; and yet her pain was not so great as she had expected. Perhaps in this interview Sir Lionel had shown more of his real self than she had ever seen before. Anyhow, though her heart ached sadly, Doris was dimly conscious that her lover was not quite the hero she had pictured him; that if she had consented to his wishes, and the shadow of disgrace had fallen on her later on Sir Lionel would not have been above reproaching her.

He was gone. Aching in every limb from fatigue and excitement Doris rose to return to the house. She wondered Marjory had been so long. Why it was nearly seven o'clock. Very soon the Major and Mrs. Ward would return from the Beeches.

Marjory met Doris on the threshold of the picturesque old house. The Major's daughter looked unusually troubled. Pretty, willful Marjory mostly took things very easily, but to-night she seemed strangely grave.

"What did Mrs. Merton want, Marjie? what a time she has kept you!"

"Mrs. Merton has been gone ever so long," said Marjory; "but there's trouble come, Doris. There's been a telegram for papa, and I opened it, thinking it was for me; it looked like Marjory Ward, but it was Major, I suppose."

"Your father won't be angry," said Doris, consolingly; "telegrams are not private; but you never had one in your life, did you, Marjie?"

"Never. I am glad I opened it, for I have sent John to meet papa and give it him."

"But what is the matter?"

"Uncle James is very ill. He wants to see father—and me."

Doris looked bewildered.

"I thought they were not friendly; neither of us have ever seen your uncle James."

"No. Father and he had not met for years. I fancy (Aunt Meredith dropped a hint about it once) they both wanted to marry mother, and I suppose the one who failed could not forgive the other."

"Don't look so sad, Marjie! After all, you have never seen your uncle, and—"

"I was not thinking about that. I feel quite sure papa will go to Uncle James and take me with him. Doris, I can't bear the idea of leaving you here alone at my step-mother's mercy."

It was, indeed, a painful prospect. Doris looked as troubled as Marjory.

"I will come home as soon as I possibly can, and perhaps she won't be worse than usual; but I know you will have a horrid time, Doris, and I wish to goodness you could go North instead of me."

"But Sir James is your uncle and not mine, so that would not do. Marjory, if I keep almost entirely with the children Mrs. Ward can't get very angry with me."

Marjory shivered slightly.

"I don't trust her, Doris. If I possibly can persuade papa to leave me at home I will stay with you."

The Major and his wife returned while they were still talking. They had met Marjory's messenger, and discussed the telegram en route. They were of one mind. Marjory and her father must start at once. By catching the mail train to London they might be in Yorkshire by breakfast-time the next morning.

"I have not seen Jim for over twenty years, and I won't refuse what may be his last wish," said the Major.

"And of course Marjory will go with you?" said her step-mother, bitterly. "If your brother had troubled to inquire about his relatives, Edward, he would know you have a son who ought to be his heir."

"Bless you, Julia," said the soldier, simply, "none of my children will be that. Jim married a widow with one son; a young fellow who must be twenty-five or so by this time. He'll come in for all there is to have, mark my words!"

There was quite a bustle and stir. Doris, at Mrs. Ward's desire, packed a small Gladstone bag for Marjory, while the Major hurriedly put a few

things into a portmanteau for himself; then the travellers partook of a scrambling sort of meal, leaving Riverside a few minutes before nine.

"Take care of yourself, dear," Edward Ward said kindly to his adopted daughter; "be a good girl and try to keep the peace."

The last words were spoken in a whisper. He had previously begged his wife to be kind to "poor little Doris." Then the two girls were looked for a moment in each other's arms. A minute later, and the fly had started. Marjory and Doris were parted for the first time since the latter, a little baby, had been brought home by Marjory's mother.

The first evening passed really much better than Doris had expected. Mrs. Ward was tired from her afternoon's amusement, and all the bustle caused by her husband's sudden departure.

She was quite contented for once to lean back in an arm-chair, and do nothing. She even allowed Doris to read to her, and expressed her opinion that she read very fairly, and when at ten o'clock they parted for the night the poor little orphan thought things had gone off very well.

And what was stranger still the next morning found no change. Mrs. Ward was still most amiable.

Could it be (Doris asked herself) that she really pitied the girl for the loss of Marjory's bright company, or was she really not so unkind at heart as her words and manner always implied?

"I am going to Brighton to-morrow," said Mrs. Ward, suddenly. "I will take you with me, Doris, if you like."

The big, bustling seaside town was only about twenty-five miles from Riverside, and the trains, though few and far between, were tolerably fast for a local line, doing the distance in a little over an hour. The Wards were very fond of running over to Brighton for the day; but Doris had never been included in the expedition before.

"Shall you take any of the children?" asked Doris.

"No. I am going chiefly because a friend of mine is staying in the King's-road, and I want to call on her. She is a great invalid, and I shan't be able to take you there with me; but I daresay you can amuse yourself for half-an-hour or so on the pier."

"It will be delightful," said Doris, feeling that Mrs. Ward had suddenly been transformed into quite an amiable being. "The weather is so beautiful, if it only lasts till to-morrow we shall have a charming day."

The weather did last. Weather is apt to be complacent in August; and under a cloudless sky Mrs. Ward and Doris arrived at Brighton, which seemed to the inexperienced girl a perfect earthly paradise.

Mrs. Ward took her on the pier to hear the band, and then they lunched at a very celebrated pastry-cook's, after a stroll on the esplanade; it was only then that the lady seemed to remember her sick friend.

"I am going to Mrs. Arden's now," she said, briskly, "and you had better meet me here at five o'clock. We will have tea, and then we shall have plenty of time to catch the last train home. It goes at half-past six. You quite understand, Doris, you are to be here by five o'clock. If I am a minute or two late ask for a bun or something and sit down in the inner room. I shall come straight there to look for you," then, as an after-thought, she took five shillings from her purse, and gave them to the girl. "I daresay you will want to buy something. The Brighton shops seem to charm the money out of one's pocket."

So they parted. Doris made a mental note of the name of the shop and its position, not that she was likely to forget either, for both had impressed her. Then she bought a new magazine and strolled on to the pier; for her the sea had such a wonderful fascination that to sit at the head of the pier and gaze seaward on the tossing restless green waves was the most delightful pastime.

"Miss Doris, is it possible!"

The girl started; a tall, pleasant-looking man

stood before her, with a very sharp-featured, vinegary-faced lady on his arm.

Doris recognized her uncle David's late assistant, who had gone south to take a practice, purchased just before the girls left Hartleigh.

The lady was a stranger, but Doris guessed that she must be Dr. Gordon's sister, whom she knew was to keep house for him, which proved to be correct.

The girl blushed when the Doctor presented her to his sister as "Miss Ward," but she could hardly correct the mistake in a public place on account of the painful explanations which would have been necessary. Alas, when she last saw Andrew Gordon she had believed Ward to be her real name.

The trio sat down together, and talked of many things—of Mr. Meredith's foreign home, and Dr. Gordon's new suburban practice, where he was getting on as well as he could reasonably expect; but strange to say, very little was said of Riverside and its inmates.

Doris had mentioned that Marjory was in Yorkshire with her father, and she herself had come over to Brighton with Mrs. Ward for the day, but neither of her listeners thought it strange that she spoke so formally of the lady; a girl grown up before she was a step-mother would naturally not be very familiar in speaking of her.

On the whole, Doris was a little sorry she had met the Gordons. The Doctor she liked for old sake's sake, and it was pleasant to talk of scenes and people mutually remembered; but she conceived a strange prejudice against Miss Gordon, and felt she could gladly have dispensed with her acquaintance.

Doris had a vague fear Miss Gordon wished for an introduction to Mrs. Ward, which she shrank from giving, because she could by no means depend upon that lady's temper; she might receive the brother and sister most cordially, or she might treat them with the utmost frigidity; so on the whole Doris preferred not to risk it, and punctually a few minutes before five she took leave of her acquaintances and went to keep the rendezvous at the confectioner's.

She had not been gone long when Miss Gordon discovered a cup of tea would do her good, and either with the motive Doris had imputed to her, or because the shop was really the nearest and the most inviting, she insisted on Andrew's escorting her to the very place where Doris was to meet Mrs. Ward.

Miss Gordon entered the shop at a quarter past five, and the lady's sharp eyes soon made out her late companion sitting alone at a small round table, and settled herself at the next, telling her brother they would be company for Miss Ward until her step-mother arrived.

Doris did not grow anxious at first. Mrs. Ward had warned her she might be late, and so until the half hour had struck the girl did not trouble in the least, but after that she grew vaguely uneasy; she turned her head wistfully whenever anyone entered from the shop.

She began to answer Miss Gordon at random; she wished feverishly Mrs. Ward would come; the bun was long since eaten, she had since ordered herself a cup of tea, solely because she fancied the attendants looked as though they thought she had monopolised a chair long enough.

"Does Mrs. Ward know Brighton well?" asked Dr. Gordon, pitying the girl's evident distress. "Can she have lost her way?"

"Oh, no; she used to live in Brighton once before she was married, and she knows it thoroughly; I think she must have been detained. She can't be much longer, for our train goes at six thirty, and it is the last to Riverside to-night."

"How early to be the last," said Miss Gordon.

"Well, you see it is only a quiet local line; I do not think there is a single station of importance. On gala occasions there is a special late train, but usually the six thirty answers very well."

Dr. Gordon looked a little grave.

"If you will allow me, Miss Doris, I think I had better escort you to the station, we shall get there now in good time, but if we wait any longer you will have to hurry. I think Mrs.

Ward must have forgotten her appointment with you and gone direct to the station."

Doris hesitated, but it was the last train; that thought decided her; it must be better for her to disobey Mrs. Ward's directions than to risk being left stranded at Brighton Station unable to reach home.

"If you are sure you do not mind," she said anxiously, "I shall be much obliged; you see I have never been in Brighton before, and I might lose my way. Are you sure we have time, would it be better to take a cab?"

"We have plenty of time to get there before six thirty. Have you a return ticket?"

"Mrs. Ward has it in her purse. I can buy another."

It was a good step to the station, but the doctor had been quite right in his calculation; they reached the booking office at twenty-two minutes past six, and so had ample time to buy the ticket and look about for Mrs. Ward.

"We had better get this ticket first," he said, kindly; "then if we do not see your step-mother I will put you into the train. What is the name of your station, and what class, first?"

"No, second. A second single to Earliston, please."

But a most unpleasant surprise was in store for them both.

"Earliston," repeated the booking office clerk, "there's no train there to-night. The last started at six three."

(To be continued.)

A WOMAN OF SPIRIT.

—30—

HOLLYFIELD was at its prettiest when Jessie Bourne came to live there. The old house, with its square, old-fashioned porch, ivy-clad gables, and newly-painted window sills, glistened through the emerald freshness of the trees. And the pretty young bride, standing on the rustic bridge that spanned the brook, looked up and drew a long sigh of contentment.

"Oh, Charlie, how beautiful this is!" she said, softly. "How happy we shall be! We can walk in the woods and gather wild flowers and ferns, and we can row on the river, and have readings on the lawn, and sketch all these exquisite bits of scenery, and life will be like a beautiful dream."

Charlie Bourne whistled rather dubiously.

"Of course it will, my dear," said he. "And I'm glad you like the old place. But I rather think there'll be something to do besides read and row and sketch."

The next morning, when Jessie came down to breakfast in a white dress, with cherry ribbon bars all over it, Charlie looked at her in surprise.

"My dear," said he, "if we expect to get on in the world you must keep earlier hours than this."

"Why, it's only seven o'clock!" said Jessie, artlessly glancing up at the clock.

"Humph!" was the reply. "I daresay Dick's wife at the next farm has been up since day-break."

"Since daybreak!" echoed Jessie. "Why, what can she possibly find to busy herself with?"

"You'd better ask her," said her husband, a little drily. "A farmer's wife can't sit down and fold her hands, unless she wants to ruin her husband outright."

Jessie looked piteously at him, but she asked no more questions.

After breakfast, however, she put on her little gipsy hat, with its drooping brim and its wreath of daisies.

"Charlie," she said to her husband, who was busy giving directions to his farm-hands, "I am going across the meadow to see Dick's wife."

Charlie looked at his young bride rather doubtfully.

"Are you, pet?" said he. "Don't be long gone, then, for there's plenty to do."

Jessie shrugged her shoulders, and tripped lightly over the dewy meadow to where the pretty home of her brother-in-law, Richard, nestled in a grove of ancient elms.

"If this is life in the country," said the bride to herself, "I think I'll go back to teaching in London."

"Dick's wife" was summoned from the dairy to receive her visitor. She had met Jessie before, and welcomed her with a smile and a cordial pressure of the hand.

Then she dropped into a chair, with a hand pressed to her side, a pale, wearied, spiritless-looking creature.

"Amy," said Jessie, "tell me what you have done to-day, and what you do other days. Charlie is holding you up as a model to me, and I want to hear what it is that you actually have accomplished."

Mrs. Dick smiled.

"Yes," she said, "they tell me that I am a good worker. And I do get along well, though I say it. You see I rise at four o'clock every morning—one can accomplish so much before the sun really gets hot. This morning I churned twenty pounds of butter, strained and skimmed the milk, scalded the pans, fed the little pigs, and the young turkeys, and ducks, and chickens, and got the breakfast for Richard and the men, and the children."

"Stop a minute," said Jessie, who had been listening with intent eyes. "So Dick has men to help him?"

"Yes—he always keeps two in summer and one in winter," explained Amy.

"Then I think you ought to have a woman to help you," argued the bride.

"It would cost too much," said Amy, solemnly. "Well—let me see, where was I? Ah!—after breakfast I make the beds and sweep all the principal rooms, and get the children ready for school. Then on Mondays I wash; Tuesdays I iron; Wednesdays I bake and clean; Thursdays I do my fruit and pickles; Fridays I clean; and Saturdays I bake again and get ready for Sunday, for Dick always invites friends to dine with him on Sundays, and it is the busiest day in the week. And besides, I have all my own clothes and the children's to mend and make; stockings to knit, soft soap to make, and—"

"Oh, stop, stop!" cried Jessie, lifting her hands as if in terror. "I don't wonder, Amy."

"You don't wonder at what?" said Mrs. Dick Bourne, in some surprise.

"That Dick's first wife died at twenty-six, and that you, at thirty-six, are following as rapidly in her footsteps as can be," cried Jessie, indignantly.

And the spirited young wife, leaving Mrs. Dick in amazement, hurried away.

Charlie was standing at the old well in his working costume, as Jessie tripped up the path. He looked up with a smile.

"Well, pet," he said, "where are you going?"

"To pack my box," said Jessie, with mischief sparkling in her deep, soft eyes. "I've been investigating matters, and I don't like the situation."

"What situation?"

"That of maid-of-all-work, laundress, cook, housekeeper and lady, all rolled into one, at the wages of my clothes and food."

"But, my dear," said Charlie, with a puzzled face, "you are talking nonsense. Nobody expects all that of any woman."

"Don't they, though," said Jessie. "There's where you are mistaken. It is precisely what Dick's present wife has been doing for him all these years; what his first wife wore herself out in doing, and what you are preparing yourself to demand of me; but I had a deal rather go back to teaching."

"I tell you what, Charlie," she added, "if you will provide me all the servants I need, and let me live in my home as its ruling spirit, not as its drudge, I'll remain here; and what is more, I'll make more profit for you out of the girls' labour than ever Dick does with all his pinching and screwing out of his poor wife. Otherwise I shall leave Hollyfield Farm to-day."

"I believe you are right after all, pet," said Charlie, with an admiring smile. "Stay! with us, pet, and you shall see that we know how to appreciate you as you deserve."

So Mrs. Charlie Bourne stayed, the head of an efficient establishment of stout servant girls, who officiated as hands to her own active brain, and no place in the neighbourhood flourished more than Hollyfield, though its mistress had always plenty of time on her hands for her favourite occupations.

"It's extravagance—ridiculous extravagance," exclaimed Dick, when he heard of his brother's new administration of affairs.

"We'll see how the accounts turn out at the end of the year," said Charlie, quietly.

And at the year's end Dick was unable to imagine how it was that his brother's account had swelled to nearly double his own.

"We have lived much more economically than you," said he. "We have kept no lazy, wasteful, shirking girls."

"Ah!" said Jessie, "I have made a profit on them; and besides, you don't count the doctor's bills while poor Amy lay ill so long with rheumatic fever, brought on by scrubbing her kitchen floors herself, nor the expenses of the nurse who took care of her. To be sure, little Amy and Fan did the work of the house between them while their mother was ill, but neither of them will be strong for a year, so heavy was the strain. And next year you will probably have undertakers' bills to pay into the bargain."

"No I won't!" said Dick, resolutely. "I'll try Charlie's way, and see if it will brighten Amy and the children up a little."

"Call it Jessie's way," said Charlie, laughing, "for she is the originator of the whole thing."

"It's a sensible way, anyhow," said Dick, "whosoever it may be."

For bright little Jessie had converted them both.

THE EVENING OF HIS LIFE.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"Don't sing that, Kate, it is a dismal thing!" says Margery Melrose to her sister, as her fresh young voice trills one of Moore's plaintive ballads,—

"Joys that pass away like this
Alas! are purchased dear,
If every beam of bliss
Is followed by a tear."

"Oh, don't! it makes me melancholy," persists Margery, as she playfully puts her fragile fingers to her ears.

"You dear little goose!" replies her sister, tenderly raising the poor little head of the invalid, whose cushions had become tumbled and crushed. "Shall I sing you something to make you laugh, eh?"

"Yes, dear!" says the sufferer, softly, "sing my favourite, 'Such a Merry Girl am I.' I cannot bear to hear and themes from you—somehow it pains me, you see!" smiling sweetly. "I like to hear you, who are so bright and lovely, sing gay tunes. You were meant for brightness and gaiety, not for sadness. It is different to me, who am a quiet little mouse chained to this sofa. You are my world, my all!"

A white arm steals softly round Margery's neck, and a loving kiss on the girl's lips, with a promise given of obedience.

No wonder Margery watched her sister with eyes brimming over with admiration, for never could there be a fairer sight than Kate presents as she sits, her taper fingers wandering over the ivory keys, playing the prelude to the ballad she is about to sing.

She is a perfect vision of grace and beauty—a poem of loveliness—tall, almost to stateliness, large blue eyes, dark, arched eyebrows, and fringed lashes that add a dangerous depth to

their expression; a rich creamy skin with hair of deep bronze-gold raised back from her broad brow, and falling in rich, rippling waves over her glorious shoulders; but there, it would puzzle a poet to describe her beauty. It was grand—a poet that came straight from the greatest master, whose skill is beyond any painter in creation.

The bedridden girl idolized her sister with a love beyond ordinary mortals; for she was not all she has left, now that they are nearly alone in the world, except the rich, stern uncle whom they are living with after the death of their mother, which had taken place about a year before this story opens.

It is a pleasant room, with a soft, thick carpet, all moss and shaded leaves, with clusters of rose-buds looking fresh and natural.

Cosily Indian and Persian rugs lay about on chairs, floor, and couches, giving an oriental touch; magnificent gold and silver-woven curtains of Eastern manufacture waved in the spring breeze, and by their rich-toned colours contrasted with the ebony furniture, covered in its number satin gold-fringed draperies.

A dark blue sheeny satin dress, with frills of rare lace, fell back from the glorious arms of the singer; the same costly lace half concealed the snowy bosom, and a knot of primroses lay peeping their fairy heads, as if determined to be seen in their sweet horns of security and maiden beauty.

Margery was clad in a soft, pearly-gray loose robe, a spray of white hyacinths not purer than the delicate face and hands that are busy trying to draw its counterpart—a favourite amusement with her when tired of reading.

"Did you like that?" asked Kate, as she puts aside the song, and is tumbling over piles of music to find something nice.

"Of course, dear. Who can help it, when you sing it! See, I am getting on—these petals are coming better to-day. I mean to try them in silk; if I could only get the exact shade it would be delightful! May I try my hand with your primroses! They are prettier than these daffodils, I fancy."

A bright flush suffused Kate's face, as she returns: "I will go and gather some, dear! But these—"

"Were given, oh, sweet sister, by a brave knight. Say, am I right?"

"Fie, fie! you find out all my little secrets; it is scarcely fair—but, no, I was only joking, mouseie, so don't look so very wise. Have you forgotten that this is primrose-day, the day of days, when we Conservatives don our dear, departed leader's colours?"

"I have not forgotten that a certain gentleman, who shall be nameless, is also a Conservative!" she replies, smiling mischievously. "Do you think I am lying here for nothing all day? Why, I know more than anyone would believe. I could divulge such secrets that—but there, what am I saying?"

"Do tell me one, and I will fetch you a whole bunch, dear!" this winningly. "Come, don't be covetous and keep me out in the cold, you dear, wise mouseie!"

"Fetch the flowers first, and then I will make up my mind if I shall let you into the cabinet secrets!" she says, laughing merrily at the curiosity she had evoked.

"Mind, that's a bargain!" stepping out of the long French easement onto a terrace, and looking with sparkling eyes at the pretty scene that stretched before her.

A grand sweep of park and forest, as can only be found in the Midlands, dotted with hawthorns and stately beeches, and the oaks "high top bald with dry antiquity," and showing the work of many a fierce storm.

Groves of pine, avenues of chestnuts, coppices, a silvery stream gleaming through the spring foliage, and ferns that grow here waist high.

All is rich, fertile, while the deer skip fearlessly about, and the birds are so tame, and go on with their avocations quite regardless of your presence, and the golden pheasant will sun his plumage quite daringly in the branches, perfectly at ease with himself, and heedless of such an instrument as a gun.

Kate drank in the sylvan scene with a subdued eling—half rapture, half awe—as she ran down

to the hazel-hedge, where her favourites lay in pale yellow clusters, with the sweet companionship of hyacinths and fragrant violets.

"Here is my part of the bargain!" laughs Kate, holding a bunch of primroses tantalisingly in front of the girl; "but you must now tell me the secret. Honour among even light-fingered people is my motto!"

"How very considerate you are, Miss Kate, to the feelings of certain personages. You do not believe in calling a spade a spade!"

"Do you mean to earn these? Once, twice, three times, going, gone!" placing the spring treasures tenderly by her sister's side.

"Can't you guess?" Margery asks, mysteriously. "Come, I won't tease you any longer lest you punish me. Well, to commence, I heard Uncle say to Müller that Sir Selton Pensonby was coming to stay a few days. There, isn't that news?"

A blank look came into Kate's face, and she says in a disappointed tone,—

"What's that to me? If that is all you have to tell, it might have waited—one old fogey more or less will make very little difference to me or you, mouseie!"

"How do you know he is such an antiquated old party, eh?" raising herself on her elbow, to look into the beautiful, proud face.

"Well, he's an old friend of uncle's, and young men, as a rule, do not care for the society of old ones."

"Oh! what a comfort uncle can't hear you; he would be in no end of a rage if he did. Why, he was only saying to Captain Roberts the other day that he felt not a day older than thirty—that, in fact he could take a fence with any young spark in the county!"

"It's right down dreadful to hear old people boast!" returned Kate, sagely.

"Here he is!" whispers the invalid. "Don't let him hear us. Poor old uncle, he has his little crotchets!"

"What are you two girls hatching!—mischief, I expect," says General Malrose, cheerily. "Haven't you a cup of tea for me? I have been busy in the stables all the afternoon; those fellows are a regular lazy set. By George! I wish they had a taste of a soldier's life, they wouldn't want to hang about like a set of vagabonds. Bah! I wish I could order them all to the orderly-room, or court-martial them!"

"What have they done, uncle, to call down such displeasure?" inquired Kate, saucily.

"It is not what they have done," he says, vituperatively, "it's what they haven't done! Why, Peggy's coat looked as if the poor beast had rolled herself in a dust heap!"

It was one of the General's hobbies to grumble and scold the men-servants, and set them right about face, as he termed it; but they were not at all alarmed; in fact, they rather liked it than otherwise, as they played off each other to the old gentleman in a very clever way, saying, slyly, when one of their colleagues was not forthcoming,—

"Want Forbes, General? Why, he's got such an awful toothache as knocked him quite over."

"But where's that scamp Martin?" the General would ask.

"Martin, General. Why he's got the gout that bad in his foot that he can't put it to the ground."

"The fact is, it appears that a hospital is the proper place for all of you rascals," the General would reply hotly, turning on his heel, while the delinquents he had gone to badger and wake up would grin through the loft windows at their clever ruse, and congratulate each other in escaping the rials of the governor's wrath.

"Dear, dear," murmurs Kate, smiling as she rang the bell for tea, "you are sadly treated amongst us all."

"Don't be caustic," returns her uncle, pettishly. "You women are a set of silly jades, that encourage insubordination with your shilly-shallying lackadaisical airs and graces," taking a pinch of snuff, and snapping the gold box viciously, a way with him when he wanted to assert his rights with the womenkind.

But a softened look came into his face as it

lighted on Margery, the pale, sweet-tempered mouseie and household fairy. In a moment the old gentleman's ire was extinguished, for he had a very soft spot in his heart for the patient sufferer and orphan child of his dead brother, who died out in India with his hand closely locked in his brother's, all bedewed in the clammy death-sweat and agony of a mortal wound dealt with cruel, unerring aim by the enemy; and those last sacred words rang out clear in his mind,—

"Take care and protect poor little Margery, for my sake."

Right well had the General performed his promise, taking both sisters at the death of their mother to his own home, and acting, in every sense, the part of a father.

"I didn't include you, my dear," he says, going up and putting her head gently. "You are exempt from the foibles of your sex."

"Perhaps," she says, naively. "You forgot, uncle, dear, that the nature is here, but the power of carrying it out is the only thing that saves me from being like my compere, eh?" stroking his hand affectionately, and looking, oh so wistfully into his keen grey eyes, that became somewhat misty at the gentle reminder of her affliction.

"You never would or could be anything but what you are," he replies, huskily, "my little home fairy; but Kate, child," drinking his tea, and smiling benignantly at the lovely, satin-robed figure with the soft, mellow sunset glinting on her head, making it appear a molten shower of gold, then darting with magic power its rays on the jewelled fingers, till the gems flash and sparkle as they mingle with the pretty Dresden cups and bright silver teapot, dispensing tea and cake.

"This is uncommon good cake, Kate," says the old gentleman, quite mollified and contented now that he has got comfortably settled down to his favourite beverage.

A pleased flush came into Margery's face as he continues,—

"Yes, I like it so much that I will take another piece. I must tell cook how nice it is, and order one every day."

"Then you will have to make your request to Margery, uncle," replies Kate. "She is the cook."

"Heaven bless my soul!" exclaims the General, incredulously; "you never mean to say that mouseie—"

"Well, you see, uncle," she says, demurely, "I feel sometimes very dull, and, oh, so dreadfully useless, a kind of log to be put here or there, neither useful nor ornamental; so I have been studying a treatise on the art of cooking; and I am, oh, so happy now, for I can be wheeled into the storeroom, where I am in my glory. That sponge cake is my first effort, curry is my next, and at dinner you shall be my judge and jury."

"Capital!"—holding out his plate for another slice, like a hungry schoolboy, just to please his favourite—"Tozer never made anything to come near it, I'll be bound. If the curry only turns out half as nice you will have proved yourself an artist. But whom have we here? Why, it's young Fitzgerald, as I live, just entered the side gate."

A crimson tide flooded Kate's face and neck instantly, and her eyes dropped perceptibly to hide the sparks of pleasure that danced in them.

"Just in time for a cup of tea and a treat, Fitzgerald, in the shape of a cake made by fairy fingers," says the General, warmly.

"You're the fairy fingers, I presume," Frank Fitzgerald returns, as he presses Kate's little hand extended to welcome him, and looks with a yearning swift glance into their blue depths.

"Then, indeed, you are wrong," replies beautiful Kate, smiling graciously; "the fairy in this instance is Margery; but tea gets cold, you know, and time flies," as she made room for him at the table after he had paid his devoirs to the invalid, "and I want just that delicious piece of scenery before the sun quite

sets—just there between the church and that coppice.

"Need I say that I am only too willing," he replies, softly, a way he has when addressing her even on the commonest place subjects.

"I am especially glad you have come this evening," says the General, "for I expect my dear old friend Colonel Ponsonby, and you will help us to brighten his welcome, and amuse him. He is particularly partial to billiards. Now I am not up to it; now, somehow, my hand is not quite so accurate as it used to be; sight's all right. Oh, yes, could knock a fly off your head at fifty paces."

"Heaven forbid!" thinks Frank, smiling at the old gentleman's little crotchets; "I'd be a dead 'un if you did." Aloud he says, "most happy, if you will permit me to run away to change my attire."

"Never mind about that, dear boy; you will do all well enough if the girls don't object. It will be a relief to see a man seated at dinner not looking like a waiter or supernumerary undertaker. Give me a nice comfortable tweed shooting jacket or my old mess jacket. Hang conventional customs; freedom is my motto in everything, liberty of speech, action, all."

"How about us, uncle?" put in Kate, naively.

"That is where I draw the line, my dear. Women would make ducks and drakes with it. They are too skittish; require well keeping in hand."

"Like Peggy, eh, uncle?" she replies, demurely.

"I wish you were only half as docile," he retorts.

"Present company is, of course, excepted, uncle," pouting her rich, ripe lips regally.

"I give in, Kate. I am worsted; but what are you going to do towards entertaining Ponsonby? Mousie has made a curry for him, and Fitzgerald is to play a game at billiards."

"Surely he must be a funny kind of man if he will require the whole household trotted out before him," she says, with a little tinge of scorn.

"I know," chimes in Margery, fearing her uncle should resent Kate's tone, "you will sing some of your favourite songs. Does he like music, uncle?"

"Very much indeed, if I remember aright," he replies.

"Shall we take our sketch now?" asks Kate, collecting her materials, and donning a Duchess of Devonshire hat with rich creamy plumes that shade the fair face, lending a pensive beauty that adds to its charm—at least, so Frank thinks, as he walks at her side carrying her sketch-book.

"You don't seem very pleased to meet this visitor," observes Fitzgerald.

"I am neither pleased nor otherwise," she says, carelessly, keeping her eyes averted; "if he pleases my uncle I am satisfied. It is not to be expected that I should feel particularly elated at his visit; probably he will require the attention of Mrs. Barlow more than mine."

"What on earth for, Kate?" he asks, with a puzzled expression.

"To make his gruel warm his bed, and manufacture mustard plasters, warranted not to sting or blister," she returns, wittily.

"Poor fellow, I pity him," thinks Frank. "He certainly will have to make good headway to ingratiate himself with my peerless Kate;" but aloud says, "all the better, because then he will not be in the way to trouble you. Mrs. Barlow is a most inestimable person, and may prove a comfort to him."

"There you are, teasing me again," she says, testily, seating herself on an old trunk of a tree, and commencing at random to take a sketch.

"How is Lady Allingham?"

"I—I cannot say for certain," he stammers.

"You see I have not been to Shortlands since I was here."

"What must she think of you?" her hands tearing over the paper aimlessly.

"What care I what she thinks!" he exclaims, passionately; "why will you always bring that woman up!"

"Simply because she will one day be your wife; at least your mother says so," a little quiver in her throat.

"Don't be cruel, Kate; have some pity on a poor wretch who is as miserable as he can well be!"

"Why?" she persists.

"Do not ask me," he says, brokenly; "my fealty and honour are Mabel's, my love is yours. Could anyone be more at war with himself or feel more hopeless!"

"Then why do you come here, feeling what you do?" her face flushing crimson as she turns round and confronts him.

"Would you wish me to banish myself from everything that makes my life worth the living—to bar me out of Paradise?"

"How can it be that, when you enter it with false feelings!" she asks, passionately. "Only truth and honour should enter Eden."

"Heaven knows truth does, for I love you with my whole soul, unfortunately, while you despise and mock me. Can I help my heart yearning for one who is as cold and hard as marble? Would that I could erase your sweet face from my heart; I would wrench it out if it killed me, if it were not written, engraved there indelibly."

"Forgive me, Frank, I did not mean to wound you, but such words from you to me are treason!"

"Why treason, my love?" he says, hoarsely;

"If you would give me only one word of hope! Mabel would never see me again. I could wait if for years. I only want one little word. Oh! my love, do say it; don't send me away to a life of misery and deceit. I know my poverty is a barrier, but I have talents that will burst their fetters at your sweet bidding. I could do or dare anything for you. My reward would be to lay my laurels at your feet. Time even would pass away unthought of, because hope would be my guiding star and you my reward!"

"Cease, Jack, it can never be," she says, sadly; "my uncle would never consent, and I owe him the obedience of a daughter; besides, your mother would curse me. She has set her mind on Mabel becoming your wife. Forget what has passed."

"Bid me to forget I live," he says, despairingly. "Ask the setting sun to rise again before morning—you might as well."

"I only plead to you to try and forget me. But oh! Frank," as her eyes caught the passionate rapture that blazed in his and made her forget all, in a moment of delicious bliss, "I do care for you, I—I—"

But he had caught and imprisoned her hands, and looked yearningly into the sweet blushing face as if he would read her very soul. What he read sent the young blood coursing through his veins like electricity.

With an irresistible impulse he clasped her in his arms, and snatched a kiss from the rosy lips.

But that mad passionate career awoke her from her brief dream of ecstasy and its utter folly and hopelessness.

Struggling to free herself, she exclaims, angrily,—

"Let me go, Frank, we are both to blame; I am mad. How dare you!" panting with shame mingled with love, while her eyes dropped shyly, till the fringed lids lay on her delicate face, making her more entrancing than ever.

She little knew how bewitching she appeared to her lover, or she would certainly not have blamed him for that stolen kiss that burned and tingled on her innocent lips till anger took the place of love for the moment.

"How dare he!" she thinks, reproachfully, "compel me to confess my love! I know I have betrayed myself; oh! the dreadful shame, the burning ignominy to love one who is fettered. I shall die of shame."

"I am happy, Kate, my peerless love," he says, joyfully. "What care I now! Even you will not crush hope out of my breast—everything is possible to him that will wait. I can. You may try to laugh me to scorn, but I have

learned that patience is a virtue, and that you do not hate me entirely. I am satisfied, content in paradise!"

"What do you intend to do?" she asks, dreamily.

"Hope on till I die. You have a heart, and I shall win it. Yes, my darling, rest assured Mabel Allingham will never be my wife. Years may pass before I can claim you, but your heart is mine—mine till it ceases to beat."

CHAPTER II.

"COLONEL PONSONBY, my niece, Kate Melrose—Kate, my old and valued friend, that you have heard so much of."

She found herself before a tall, rather powerful-built man of military presence, of about forty, with a keen yet kindly face framed in crisp, curly hair just commencing to silver; a moustache also frosted, but giving a lustre to his dark, penetrating eyes and eyebrows.

No woman could look without a desire to please and respect its owner—it was a face to command, perhaps fear.

Margery and the colonel became fast friends at once. There was something that appealed to the softest part of the gallant soldier's nature—her sweet temper, patience, and resignation.

After dinner he made his way to her side, and in gentle, modulated tones chatted about other lands and people, of his exploits and experiences, till the brown-eyed girl's face lighted up with animation and excitement.

But though his conversation was directed to her his eyes never left the stately Kate. Every movement and silvery laugh interested him.

"How lovely your sister is!" he says, as she passed the couch smiling radiantly, and giving Margery a fresh bunch of white lilacs just picked by Frank.

"Do you think so?" she says, simply. "I am so glad you admire her. I like everyone to see her with my eyes, and especially you, because uncle says you are an oracle about most things."

"It does not require much wisdom, Miss Margery, to ascertain that your sister is a perfect queen of beauty, though I must admit I have had opportunities of judging, having seen the acknowledged beauties of most countries."

"Come, Kate, give us a song!" says the General. "Here, Frank, you look out something. Perhaps she will favour us then."

"With pleasure, General," replies Fitzgerald, with alacrity.

A cloud of annoyance passed over Colonel Ponsonby's face as he noticed Kate follow Frank to help him select some music, to see the two young heads close together over their task—his the artist type, all loose and flowing, hers small and crowned with golden plaits, with one cream rose nestling close to her tiny ear.

They made a splendid pair, he with his dark-grey fathomless eyes and sun-tanned, clear-cut features—she so winning, tender, and bewitchingly sweet.

"Mr. Fitzgerald is a very old friend," he ventures to remark.

"Yes, that is, was when we were all children together, but we lost sight of him from then till a year ago, when he returned from Milan, where he has been studying for the life of a painter. He is very clever, they say. Uncle prophesies a great future if he will only apply himself to work."

"Then I presume he prefers the roving life of a butterfly at present—oh, Miss Margery! sipping sweets and drinking, who knows, perhaps, inspiration from these delightful syrian surroundings. Your beautiful sister, too, may be the future painter's grandest conceptions for a picture even unknown to himself. Lying dormant deep down in our nature is a desire to reproduce people, places, and lovely objects; they fix themselves on the mind or rather brain, the result being treasures that live from generation to generation, becoming more intrinsically valuable as time mellow them, and the

world prize them as heirlooms to be held sacred."

"And the novelists," pursues Margery, "do they retain incidents, and garner up beautiful and sad impressions to reproduce them to the world?"

"There is no doubt about it," he replies. "My impression is that the Divine Creator ordained that nothing should be lost that is beautiful to the eye—that, in fact, the painter makes a picture to gladden the mind—but Miss Melrose is singing."

Kate's voice was a mellow, clear soprano, its lower notes passionate, thrilling. The words rang out clear and distinct, those sad, but beautiful ones of Longfellow's "Bridge."

"But now it has fallen from me, it is buried in the sea,
And only the sorrow of others throws its shadow
O'er me.
Yet how often, oh! how often, I had wished that the
ebbing tide
Would bear me away on its bosom o'er the ocean
wild and woe."

"How splendidly sung!" exclaimed the Colonel, going up to the singer and standing by her side. "You have given me such a treat. Will you favour me by singing it again?"

"Certainly, if you wish," she says, calmly. He turned over her leaves, much to the chagrin of Frank, who gnawed his moustache angrily.

"I can't say that I particularly care for that 'Bridge' affair," observes Fitzgerald, gloomily; "there are several I like better. Sing 'Some day.'"

"I am tired," she says, leaving the piano, followed by the Colonel, who placed a chair for her beside Margery, taking one next to her.

"Where's your sketch, Fitzgerald?" asks the General.

"Which one, sir?" returns Frank, taken off his guard.

"The one you and Kate went out to take this afternoon."

"Oh!" draws Frank, putting on an air of indifference; "the light was bad, you know, and we took a stroll instead."

A burning flush glowed over poor Kate's face; and Margery, quick to notice any change in her sister, noted it with a sharp pang of pain, as she thinks, sadly,—

"How hard it is to be chained here like a poor dog, while my darling sister may be in peril—she so lovely, so perfectly unfitted to cope with the world and alluring temptation. Why, oh, why I do not come here—he who is engaged to Lady Allingham? I must talk to her and warn her of impending danger, even if she scorns me. He is so handsome, so dangerously seductive, and my darling possesses a passionate nature that I fear will cause her bitter misery; it is so overwhelming in its intensity if roused. Oh, dear mother, would that you had lived to see your treasured darling safely garnered in the breast and home of a man worthy of her. How powerless am I to guide so spirited and impetuous a nature!"

"Why wouldn't you sing 'Someday'?" whispers Frank, jealously, as he bids Kate good-night.

"You sang 'The Bridge' to please him," "You hurt me," as the pressure of his fingers tightened their hold, and pierced the delicate flesh with the diamonds she wore. "I was fatigued, and you are cruel," looking ruefully at the little crimson streak.

"I am a wretch—a brute!" taking his handkerchief and stanching the tiny stream tenderly.

"Here you two, postpone your fiddlefaddling sketching business till the morning," exclaims the General. "I never did see such strange ways young people have. They would turn right into day, Pousonby. In fact, they never seem to enjoy life till twelve o'clock comes."

A lowering frown from the Colonel, who watched the pair as they stood on the terrace fully three minutes before Fitzgerald ran down the steps, a favourite way of departure with him instead of going out at the hall-door.

"Now for a glass of toddy before we turn in," says the General, cheerily, as he systematically sliced tiny wafers from a lemon, placing them in the glasses with lumps of crystal white sugar,

then applying from a silver spirit kettle the water with the utmost care and precision.

"Like old times," he continues, "when we bivouacked in the jungle and Ganges. Jolly days, though."

"Yes, very, but I don't fancy you wish them back, General. This is, after all, a better billet, in my opinion," looking round the handsome apartment admiringly.

"Well, yes, I am contented. There's only one anxiety now—the future of my youngest niece. I mean Kate."

"Why her particularly? I should have thought the other would have been a cause of more anxiety by her sad affliction."

"Oh, no, she is all right, dear boy; she will take care of herself. At least, I mean the Father of all will take care of her," this solemnly. "It is a husband I am puzzling my mind about now. Why on earth don't you settle down and marry, and present to the world some hostages to fortune in the shape of brave young soldiers? We shall have need of them. Such men as you should never die out. By George, I'd help you to drill them too. How they would laugh at us old boys stumping about like Chelsea pensioners when we had a twinge of the gout, eh?"

Colonel Pousonby could not help laughing at the General's picture, it was so original, though his heart beat with hope and strange excitement.

"Then your lovely niece is disengaged and perfectly heartwhole?" he says anxiously; "free, in fact, to wed the man who would be brave enough to win her."

"Certainly she is. Now why on earth don't you marry her yourself right off? This would be your home, and we should be the happiest family from here to Johnny Croats. I should have my old comrade and Margery, you the loveliest wife in the county."

"You forgot one most important link in the chain, General," he says, huskily, "that she may not care enough for me—that I may be too many years her senior."

"Fudge and nonsense! Why, my experience of women is that they prefer us a little mellow. There is something to cling to. You see they are like weak plants—want support. They will fiddlefaddle, I know, with the young sparks, but never was I fool enough to trust myself with a gushing damsel after even the most open flirtation with a beardless boy. They play them off before us to tantalize us—to bring us up to the scratch."

"You talk like an old campaigner, General," laughs Pousonby. "Why is it that they haven't caught you? The cleverest birds sometimes get their wings clipped."

An expression of sadness came into the old gentleman's face as he says wistfully, unfastening a locket from his chain,—

"There is the reason of my lonely life, old friend. It has been kept a secret from every living soul. We two brothers loved one woman, he won her, and I tried in the thick of the carnage to forget and to die; but fate ordained that he should render his life instead of me. His last words were, as you know, that I should take his place to his loved ones. I have fulfilled my promise. There you see the living Kate again. Now you know why I have been a crusty old bachelor."

"I know only how nobly you have acted," he returns, gazing intently at the lovely face that looked up at him from magical eyes of heavenly blue as the living Kate's had to-night.

"She was certainly exquisitely lovely," he continues, "too much so for the peace of mind of many men I fear. How strange is a woman's heart! To dive into its mystery is impossible. I should have thought she would have preferred you to your brother."

"Who knows! Sometimes I believe she did," he returns, sighing. "She was capricious, fickle, capricious—a mixture of bewitching ways that at the time nearly sent me mad. Then I became angry, then stern. My younger brother arrived straight from Stonyhurst—he fell desperately in love."

"She was piqued with something I had said or done. The end came quickly, for they ran

off to London, and returned man and wife. Oh, Heaven! what I suffered!"

"But there, old recollections even now are more than I can bear," dashing away a tear that no pain or hardship could have forced.

There was deep silence between the two men for a few minutes; neither cared to break it. The ashes of a dead past had to be buried, and the brave old soldier was doing his best to exorcise the sad, but sweet recollections of his lost love.

"Now you can understand my grave anxiety to see her child, whose nature is so like her poor mother's, safe. I could trust her with you. I know, too, that you would make her happy; in fact, I will confess to you a secret. I have made my will to the effect that she can never inherit this place except as your wife, in case anything should happen to me. I'm a tough old dog, but still there's nothing like caution, you know."

"Is Miss Melrose aware of this wish of yours?"

"Oh, no; certainly not! Why, that would spoil all. She would begin to jib immediately. I know her uncurbed nature. I simply made up my mind that you and she should become husband and wife this summer, if, as I just now said, I should pop off. I have made my desire doubly sure; she is too good to disregard my last wishes, so that I should get my way, though I might not be able to witness your happiness."

"I wish you had never made such a will, General," replied Pousonby; "it would be hard for her, poor child, to be compelled to marry a man out of filial duty, as you might say. She would, perhaps, hate me under such circumstances. I would wish her to come to me of her own free will. To force her inclinations would be cruel to her and to me. I would never take an unwilling bride. No, I'd rather eat my heart out than see bitter remorse and anguish in that sweet face. It would be a constant reproach to me."

"Well, I promise you that the will shall be revised; but there will be no necessity, for you will be her husband before the leaves change their colours."

CHAPTER III.

"HERE I am, dearest Kate. I am the early bird who goes out searching for my breakfast," says Margery, who has been wheeled into her sister's pretty chintz-draped bedroom all rose-buds and bright pink ribbons.

"How nice you look, mouse! Why I declare you the prettiest, dearest, little sister in the world," kissing the gentle face tenderly.

"I made them put on my prettiest gown in honour of our guest," patting the pale blue knots of ribbon that adorned her soft, fleecy cream dress.

"Do you like the Colonel?" asks Kate, abruptly, as she comb out the rich, rippling mass of hair, and commences to plait it.

"Like him! That would be poor praise, Kate. I think him the nicest man I have ever talked to. He is so high and noble minded, and yet tender and gentle as a woman."

"Why, mouse, he has quite taken you by storm. He strikes me as being very self-reserved, almost stern, yet I admit he is not half bad," fixing a bunch of white lilac at her throat, and pulling out the lace of her cambric gown carefully, and craning her neck to see how it sets.

"But it is not about him I wish to talk," falters Margery, meekly; "it is Frank that worries me."

"You! Why, mouse! Surely he has not been teasing you to sit for him!"—this evasively.

"Oh no, dear Kate, it is—but, there, I am so silly. You will not be annoyed or angry with me when I tell you his coming here is making me very unhappy, because I can see he cares more for you than a man should who is pledged to another, and I must say it if you kill me with your anger. I know you are in danger of caring for him. I have seen it in your eyes, your actions, and I have come to warn you, dear precious Kate, to save you."

"How do you know that he cares for me?" she says, brokenly. "I never even guessed it till"—but sobb broke her utterance, and flinging herself down on a couch she cried as if her heart would break, while the sun crept through the jealousies and fell on the little bowed head lovingly, as if to shed a ray of light to comfort the stricken heart.

"Poor darling!" murmurs Margery, soothingly, "come and let me comfort you. I cannot come to you. Oh! that my limbs were as willing as my heart," this pitifully, as Kate still lay on sobbing quietly.

At last she rose and tottered to Margery, and threw her arms around her neck in her old childish way and laid her golden head on the loving bosom, saying tremulously,—

"Don't think too hard of him, dear. I know it was not right, but it was my fault to encourage hopes that can never be. I see it all now, but as I love you and would never deceive you I never knew my own heart till yesterday. Then it came like some dreadful dream upon me, that he was dearer to me than I had ever conceived in my most inmost mind. What is to be done? I do not look reproachfully at me. I could not bear that as well as the other misery."

"Look at me, Kate, and tell me then if you can see anything but pitying sympathy and love; but you must be brave, and cast him out of your life, now and for ever—honour before all. Time will cure him of his present feelings for you, and he will be the first to be thankful to you for having shown him his duty."

"Then you wish me to tell him to cease his visits?" she says, despondingly.

"Of course, dear Kate. It is the only course left open now. Dismiss him to-day, and refuse to see him until Lady Mabel becomes his wife. You will soon forget a man who is fickle enough to woo a girl when he owes his allegiance to another. You are not the nature I take you for if you don't soon erase him from your thoughts."

"I will try," she says, meekly; "at all events I will obey you so far. He shall never talk to me again of love—that much I promise solemnly."

"That's my brave Kate! Now bathe those swollen eyes and make yourself look trim and bright; tear-bedimmed eyes are not the prettiest to greet our guest."

All traces of the summer storm were gone from her face when Kate took her accustomed seat at the breakfast-table in her fresh crisp blue morning-gown.

She was only a trifle pale; but somehow the pensive expression about the large blue eyes added to her beauty, giving it a more spiritual effect.

"After breakfast I want you to take Colonel Ponsonby round the place, Kate. I must run up to the Vicar's upon business," says the wily old soldier.

"Certainly, uncle," returns the unconscious girl. "Would you like to go over our ruins? We have some capital ancient ones where the monks used to hide their valuables and rare old 'sack!'"

"I wish I could get some of their wine now," observes the General; "they were the judges of a glass of the grape. Logwood is the stuff one gets now, unless you know what you are about; but I flatter myself that I have as good a pipe on now as ever was found in those old ruins. You shall taste it at dinner to-night."

"There is an old tomb, Colonel, of an old Benedictine monk in our church, who, though blind, discharged his duty as a wine-grower and taster, but had to fly from his vineyard through a charge of treason. They do say that some of his treasures are buried down beneath the monastery ruins," chimes in Kate.

"I should very much like to see all your places of interest, and with such a cicerone, why it will be delightful," returned the gallant colonel.

They were soon wending their way through fields and shady walks, stopping here and there to enjoy the little pieces of scenery and places of note, he happy, full of sweet thrilling thoughts and hopes, the outcome of his last night's conversation with his host, she pensively quiet, with that little haughty imperious manner quite subdued, never dreaming that her companion was

weaving castles—delightful ones, too—where she reigned queen.

As they neared the village heavy threatening clouds began to hover over the sky, and distant rumbling told too well that a storm was brewing.

"Is there no place of shelter?" as big drops plashed sullenly down on her gloved hands, asks the Colonel, anxiously.

"Only the church, and that may not be open," replies Kate, dreamily, not caring at the minute for the rain, her thoughts being with Frank as to how he will act when she tells him he must never come to Melrose again.

A terrible crash, accompanied by a blinding flash of lightning, now roused her from her reverie, and with a terror-stricken face she says, trembling with fear,—

"Oh, dear, I am so frightened, Colonel Ponsonby. Where can we go? What shall we do?"

In a moment his light overcoat was clasped tenderly around her shoulders, and her hand closely tucked under his arm.

"There," he says cheerfully, but yet with a tone of command, "now run. Keep step with me. We can reach the porch of the church in three minutes. There is shelter there even should the door be locked."

She obeyed like a child, but wondering why this man should have such a masterful, yet gentle way of commanding her.

"There, I told you we should escape it," he says, smiling, as they reached the porch. "And, what is better, the door is open. You are not wet!" taking off the coat and shaking the drops of rain carefully, and looking at her concernedly.

"No, I am all right. But—oh, there it is again!" burying her face in her hands to shut out the lightning flashes. "I am so stupid," she continued, piteously. "You will laugh at me for a coward."

"I shall do no such thing," he says, tenderly taking the little gloved hands away from her face and leading her down the aisle to the chancel, where the heavy stained glass windows shut out the lightning.

"Man was sent to comfort, not to ridicule, the weakness of women—to be their strength in times of trouble as you are to us when sickness lays us helpless at your mercy."

"But I am quite angry with myself," she says, forcing a little laugh. "I am not a coward, as a rule; indeed, I am not. I could face an enemy alone, unarmed, and battle for my life, but, somehow, when the elements are angry all my strength leaves me, and I feel helpless—crushed, in fact."

"He who commands the sea to stay and encroach no further will help and comfort you, whatever sorrow you may be enduring," he says, earnestly. "Only put your faith in His love and mercy; nothing then can harm you."

"Do you really believe that?" she asks, tremulously.

"Yes," he returns, softly; "and would feel so happy if you would endeavour to think so too."

"How calm and noble he looks," she thinks.

"So perfectly trustful in the Creator and His divine wisdom and mercy. How pitifully he must look down on me; perhaps is thinking how childish and ridiculous I am. Oh, I wish the storm would cease. I am ashamed to meet that calm, steady gaze! I don't like these irreproachable goody-goodies; they must have a contempt for us weaker natures, though they profess not to."

"A penny for your thoughts," he says, breaking her soliloquy.

"They were not worth even that mean coin," she replies, rather curtly.

"Well, that is to be deplored, for I fancy that you were fitted to have gems of thought."

"Why?" she asks, abruptly.

"Because so fair a temple should enshrine all that is beautiful."

"If he only knew how ignoble mine were," she thinks in self-abasement, "how he would despise me!" But says aloud, "Sometimes the fairest exteriors cover the most unsightly

objects! Now that table, for instance, is rich in velvet and gold embroidery, but if you were to raise the gorgeous cover you would find ugly brown wood stained with age."

"That is probable, Miss Melrose; but that were impossible where you are concerned. Such a simile does not apply in this case."

"Don't be too sure, Colonel; but the rain is nearly over now. I am so glad; poor Margery will be so anxious about us."

In a few moments the sun was shining out brightly, and the sky all round nearly cloudless again, and they set out for the Abbey; but somehow conversation was dropped.

"At last," cries Margery as they entered the drawing-room. "I have been so anxious; but now all care is gone that I know you are safe."

"I was half in mind to come and search for you," remarks Fitzgerald, who takes her hand first and then the Colonel's, but looking anything but pleased.

"You need have had no anxiety on my account, Mr. Fitzgerald," she replies, calmly. "I could not have been in better hands, you see."

"Where did you get to while the storm was going on?" he says, suspiciously.

"In the best place we could have been," returns Colonel Ponsonby, quietly; "in God's house."

That answer disarmed even his jealous fears, but it was easy to see he was not his usual debonaire self. There was something in Kate's expression that made him ill at ease—what, he could not have defined.

"I think this is a capital opportunity for my sketch," she says, suddenly. "Colonel Ponsonby, you will find Margery only too pleased to entertain you if you will excuse me for a while. Get out my pencils," addressing herself to Frank, who was only too pleased to do her bidding, little reckoning why she asked him out so abruptly.

"Now, Mr. Fitzgerald, we are alone," she says, bravely, but with a lump in her throat that every now and then threatens to choke her utterance.

"Mr. Fitzgerald!" he exclaims, perfectly agast at her altered manners.

"Yes," she repeats, distinctly, "for the future always Mr. Fitzgerald. You are Frank only to your affianced wife. Don't interrupt me; I know all you would say, but I tell you I dare not listen. No, I have vowed to be true to myself and you, so it's useless to try even to shake my resolve."

"Is it all to end like this?" he says, brokenly. "Would you dash the only truth and honour that I ever possessed away? Why, if you do, you will send me from you full of dark despair, believing in the truth of neither Heaven nor man."

"That is blasphemy," she says, reprovingly, "and unworthy of you;" and as he stood there in the sunlight, full of bitterness, her thoughts strayed to that other who had a short hour ago sat beside her, his words full of Christianly support and comfort, a man to rest your weary head upon when tried by anguish.

"Have you no compassion in your heart?" he asks bitterly.

"Yes," she says, softening, "but I should not be worthy of your respect if I do not act as I am now acting. You know perfectly well that you are fettered by all that a man should hold sacred, that your mother clings to life in that one desire to see you wedded to Lady Allingham. Then, again, my uncle would never give me his consent to our marrying; then, knowing that, why prolong our misery? I dare not disobey my dear uncle, who has been a second father—you dare not disobey your mother."

"You have said enough," he says slowly, "but I swear I will never make Mabel my wife so that will be certain. I shall go abroad, and see if art will prove a more faithful mistress than love."

"Shake hands," she says, tremulously, "before we part. It would make me very unhappy to think we did not part as friends."

Catching the little hand held out so trustfully

he kissed it passionately, and said, thickly, as a mist seemed to come over his eyes,—

"Good-bye, my love, my hope of all that is beautiful and pure; we may meet some day. If we do, I pray Heaven I may not feel as I do now—that time will efface your image from my heart."

"What shall you say to my uncle about your sudden flight?" she asks piteously.

"I shall write to say I have determined to travel again for my art's sake—rather good that art and hearts sound very much alike," this with a little hysterical laugh, that cut poor Kate up to hear it so merciless and heart-broken.

"Try and think kindly of us all," she says, turning to bid him another good-bye; but he had gone. He was taking giant strides with a feeling of bitter anguish and misery, his hands dug deep in his pockets, his hat pushed over his brow, as if he wanted to shut out the light of day.

"Oh, Heaven!" he groans; "if I could only lie down and die. I loved her so dearly that all that was good within me seemed to come out when I was in her presence. Now all is dark, wretched, but there is one comfort"—this exultingly—"she loves me. Yes, my beautiful, haughty Kate, you have sent me away from you, but you dare not say I have not won your heart. It is mine, yes, mine for ever. I have my revenge, yes, my cruel love, you cannot rob me of that."

In another moment the hysterical feeling burst its bonds, and he flung himself on the wet turf, and wept as he had never done even as a child.

The cold damp earth laid his feverish brow, and saved him from an attack of brain fever.

CHAPTER IV.

A lovely morning, fresh and misty, just the one that the sportsmen swear by; the hounds, with the huntsmen and whips, were drawn up, all looking brave in their pinks, on the lawn in front of the abbey, so that Margery could see the merry sight.

There was Kate, looking a perfect "Diana," in her well-fitting olive-green habit and dainty beaver hat. By her side was the Colonel, seated on a fine weight-carrying bay, the General looking spruce as spottish leathers and highly-polished boots could make him. He was known for his highly furnished silver bits, stirrup leathers, bridles and saddles throughout the county. Many were the coquetish and languishing glances from both maids and widows as he would ride past their carriages, nodding pleasantly to one and the other in his gallant fashion.

"Don't take that gate," shouted the Colonel to the General, who was spurring on his horse at a tremendous pace.

"Oh, Colonel, for Heaven's sake, stop him!" cries Kate, in dreadful alarm. "See, he is making straight for it, and Peggy seems hanging back. Oh, will no one save him!"

She dashed madly after the rash man, who, in the excitement of the moment, forgot prudence, and forced his horse to take the leap.

"Uncle," she screamed, "stop. Peggy cannot take it!"

In another moment the Colonel dashed up, but too late. The venturesome, gallant old soldier lay prone on the turf, his horse on top of him, his white face turned up to the hazy heaven.

Willing hands soon extricated him from his horse, but the warm, affectionate heart had ceased to beat; and the gay, joyous cavalcade was broken up, the hounds sent back, while a party of gentlemen made a hasty litter and carried the congenial, kind-hearted neighbour, whom they all respected and loved, back to his home, where a short hour ago he had left full of health and spirits.

Poor Kate seemed petrified into stone, the shock was so cruelly sudden. The only thing that kept her up was the necessity of comforting her favourite, poor, doubly-orphaned Margery.

"For her sake," she would say, "I must,

Yes, I will bear up. If I fail it might kill her, she is so fragile, so weak. Oh, Heaven, grant me strength for her sake!"

It is needless to harrow up the reader with the cruel details of the house of mourning, where darkened windows and sadness reigned supreme, where even the domestics spoke in whispers; so I will draw a veil, since it is too sacred to enter into the privacy and grief of the two poor orphans.

Three months have nearly passed since the General had been laid in the family vault where generations of Melroes sleep in peace, and the spring leaves were in full leaf and some already tanned by the fierce midsummer sun, and Kate and Margery are seated in the drawing-room, both looking pale and wan, the deep crape dresses heightening their pallor.

Margery looked more fragile than ever; there was a worn, pained expression about the expressive mouth that would touch the heart of a hard nature even; it bespoke repression, inward suffering, borne with touching resignation.

"Is it kind, dearest Kate, to reject all his favours, that is all I say! Even this dear home we owe to him; his is a noble nature to permit us to remain so long; many so circumstanced would have acted quite differently."

"I know what you say is right, Margery, but it cuts me to the heart to be indebted to him, a comparative stranger, for an asylum"—this with indignant scorn—"in the old home that has sheltered our dear mother and hers before us."

"Is there not a little false pride in your feelings? Does it never occur to you that our dear uncle must have loved and trusted him beyond all men to have left everything here to him?"

"Don't torture me, Margery!" she exclaims, fiercely. "I don't wish to love his memory less; but, oh! it was hard," bursting into a flood of bitter tears.

"Dear, dear Kate, be comforted. See, I can bear it; but when the day comes to leave here it will be a wrench, I fear. What a world this is of meetings and partings; first poor angel mother, then uncle, now Melrose."

"Margery, answer me one question," says Kate, starting up suddenly, and dashing the big tears away, "will it grieve you very much to leave our home? I mean—but, there I am half crazed. Would life be darker when all these comforts were a thing of the past, and we were settled in some shabby place where birds, flowers, and grass were absent? I have strength, health, and can get about, while you, poor, patient darling, lie so smitten, your only happiness to watch the growth of nature and drink in its sweets. Come, tell me truthfully!"

Two large pearly tears trickled down Margery's face that she tried to hide, but in vain. Kate's eyes had caught that silent, grief-stricken face, and its tears.

"Don't say a word, dear," she says, lovingly; "my answer is complete now. I will tell you all. Last night Colonel Ponsonby asked my hand in marriage; I refused him, at least nearly so."

"You were right, dear, if you feel you could not love him," replied Margery, approvingly.

"But that is not so," a swift blush mantling her pale face.

"Then why did you refuse him?"

"Because I could not bear the thought that he offered me his hand out of pity; being, as it were, nearly penniless I galled me beyond measure. Had I thought he cared for me it would have been so different; but to enter a man's home like a dependent, taken out of charity, oh, the bitterness of it!"

"I know he loves you dearly, Kate."

"How do you know that?" she asks, sharply.

"Because I have watched him, and seen his eyes follow you about with a world of love in them; and, what is more, have even seen him press faded flowers to his lips that you have worn and cast aside."

"Why did you not tell me, Margery!" she says, excitedly.

"I feared you would drive him away from you if you had any such suspicion because of the old love. If I was wrong let me do something to expiate my fault. I fancied that time would efface Frank's memory, and your eyes would open to the love and noble character of Colonel Ponsonby, and now my silence has spoilt all," this sadly.

"No, Margery, you did it for the best; mine was the fault for being so blind. He could not show affection more delicately than he has under the circumstances of our affliction; but my foolish head ran wild; his very quiet, gentle ways so full of tenderness made me angry, rebellious. I fancied he felt towards me a friendly pity, as he might for a spoilt child deprived of its toys."

"You did him an injustice, dear, for I solemnly assure you he loves you truly, fervently; but it would break my heart if you became his wife, loving Frank. That has been my true cause of silence. Promise me you will not accept him unless you love him. Let nothing I have said influence you. To see you a wife with a smileless face would be hard to bear. He I know is worthy, too, even of you. Do not marry him with the intention of loving afterwards; that has wrecked so many innocent hearts and homes. If love is not in a woman's heart for her lover it will never reign there for her husband."

"Never fear, darling, wise mousie," she says, with a bright smile, like a burst of sun penetrating an April cloud, "you have confided your little secrets, now I will tell you mine. Colonel Ponsonby I have admired secretly, nay, honoured, beyond any man I have ever known. To be his wife would be the greatest happiness to me—there, can I say more?"

"Then Frank was not, after all, your true ideal love?" returns Margery.

"No, dear, his nature was so volatile, so unstable, that the glamour fell from my eyes as soon as I knew the Colonel. Poor Frank, he was very earnest then, and almost carried me away with him. It was but a fancy."

"Are you quite sure, dear?" asks Margery, earnestly.

"As sure as the sun is warm and shining into this room; if we could see gay debonaire Frank, doubtless he would say the same with his love-sickness—it was too warm to last."

While the sisters were speaking the door was thrown open, and Colonel Ponsonby was announced.

Kate is flushing crimson as he comes towards her and takes her proffered hand, holding it longer than the occasion demands; then, going to Margery, and looking at the poor pensive face so kindly, and grasping the little slender fingers firmly, he says,—

"I have brought you a few grapes and some roses; may they be brought up! They came from my place in Wales this morning, and I thought, perhaps, you would like to see what our mountain air can produce."

"How kind you are to think of me," she says, gratefully. "Now, will you grant me a favour!" smiling brightly. "This room is rather warm, and wheel me out there under that tree."

"What a happy inspiration!" she thinks, exultingly. "Somehow I fancy I am a bit of a diplomatist. Will all come right, I wonder! Will my proud darling accept him! I could almost pray that she would!" and as she mused the bees hum about, sipping sweets from flower to flower, the scents of thousands of roses steal over her senses, and she forgets all in a sweet, dreamy slumber.

"Kate, I have come for my final answer," commences the Colonel, looking at her so tenderly and eagerly. "Don't keep me in suspense; you cannot imagine what I am suffering to feel that I have my future in your keeping, to bless or mar by a single word. I am fully aware what you sacrifice in becoming my wife, by the disparity in years that, unfortunately, exists; but my wealth of true esteem and affection is my only hope to make up to you the loss of a younger and more attractive husband whose homage could never be what mine is."

There is silence for a brief while, then, placing

her hand in his in childlike confidence and faith, she says, firmly,—

"There is no man that I have ever met that I would more gladly marry than you. Does that answer satisfy you?"

"Yes," he says, rapturously. "Then you were only teasing me yesterday, sweetheart, to make me feel the bliss more exquisitely—eh?"

"No," she replies, softly, "it was that I did not think you really loved me for myself."

"What on earth did you think then, my peerless Kate?" he says, holding her from him, playfully.

"That you wished to marry me for pity's sake," she says, plaintively.

"Why, do you know what I should have done if you had proved relentless?" he says, fondly looking into the azure eyes.

"I don't know," this time.

"Gone into active service again, perhaps to leave my bones bleaching on the plains of Soudan."

"For my sake?" she says, archly.

"Even so, for thy dear sake, I would be intensely happy or wretchedly miserable."

"I wonder what dear uncle would say if he knew," she says, wistfully.

"I will tell you, dearest. It was the plot scheme of his life; but I dared not breach the subject before. He invited me here to bring us together; he planned our marriage to take place this very summer."

"Poor dear, fancy him turning match-maker!" she sighs. "He was very clever never to let me know what was in his mind."

"If he had I should, perhaps, not have won my treasure," he replies, smiling. "Now, tell me truly, my darling," holding her hands, and looking searchingly into her glorious eyes, as if he would read her innermost soul, "no one has ever spoken words such as I have to you! You have never loved any man but me! Sometimes I have had dreadful haunting fancies, but I will drive them away if you will only say that little word, no."

"Much as I love you, my darling, I feel that I would rather go and leave you; never to forget; but yet that would be better than to know that the ghost of a dead love could come between us. I am no pining boy. I am a man well up in years, and my affection for you is based on a rock that will stand the test of time and eternity."

She looks at him wistfully, and her eyes are bedimmed with unshed tears. There is something so solemn in his looks and words that she thinks,—

"I dare not tell him of Frank, he would put me away from him even if it killed him. He need never know. I am committing no treason, for I do not love him now;" then she says, slowly,—

"Be comforted, Sefton, I love only you, indeed I do," and hides her sunny head on his broad shoulder, while he presses his lips tenderly, reverently on the broad white forehead, murmuring fervently to Heaven,—

"I thank Thee, oh, my Father, for the sweet helpmate Thou hast vouchsafed to me in my latter days; make me worthy of Thy precious gift, a guide for her weaker footsteps to Thy throne."

As she heard his murmured supplication she felt she could have thrown herself at his feet—so humble, yet so grandly superior to her.

"If he only knew how weak I have been, and could see my heart," she thinks, "he would put me away from him, then there would be nothing left for me but to die; to be shut out of his life would kill me."

So her little girlish love-story was never told, and, in a month's time as the General had predicted, Colonel Ponsonby and Kate Melrose became man and wife.

The wedding was perfectly quiet, only a very few old friends—one to give the bride away, the other two school companions, to act as maids.

A pearl grey satin was donned with rich soft lace to go to the altar with, but after breakfast Kate returned to her black dead silk robes, and started away for Switzerland in them, looking like a lovely lily framed in black leaves.

A wistful little face watches the bride and bridegroom as they drive away down the wide gravel sweep out of the gates.

"My beautiful darling," murmurs Margery, "may Heaven bless and sanctify your union," waving her handkerchief till all trace of the happy pair was lost; then the tears she had so bravely suppressed in Kate's presence flowed forth unchecked; but they were tears of joy, and fell like summer showers, soft and refreshing, giving peace to her anxious, surcharged heart.

Oh! what a relief a flood of tears is to a troubled soul! They are as dew to the parched earth, the fount of sweet hope, that never dries if they can be summoned. Woe to the stricken heart whose tears are dried—then, indeed, all is hopeless, dark, and drear.

CHAPTER V.

"ONLY fancy, mouse, Sefton and I have been married over six months, such blissful dear ones, too."

"Why, you are only a bride even now, Kate," says Margery, smiling, "and it is nearly a year since Sefton first came here. Do you remember our conversation just before he arrived, and what you said about antiquated old parties—eh?" mischievously.

"I cannot say that I remember every word, but I am afraid I said something very foolish. Heigho, what a lovely world this is! See, here are the snowdrops and crocuses peeping out their tiny heads. Oh, how delightful it all is!" picking a few snowy buds, and throwing them in Margery's lap; "everything looks so young, fresh, and promising."

"Like your new life, dear!" returns Margery; "but here is Sefton. I had better be wheeled in, what do you think? Two are company, three are none, and I don't want to be Banquo's ghost," laughing merrily.

"Fie, mouse; you know that Sefton and I are never so happy as when you are with us. Now you shall stay, to show you we are not such a love-sick couple you give us credit for," she says, flushing prettily.

"I thought I should find you here, sweetheart!" says the Colonel, who looks ten years younger since his marriage. "What, searching for violets! Let me help you. Mouse shall have my contributions," stooping down and searching for the sweet treasures that hide their purple heads so coyly from the gaze of the stranger.

"Here you are, Margery—catch! I am the champion! See, I have the most!" holding a cluster of fragrant violets tantalizingly before her.

"Never mind, I am not beaten, for I found the snowdrops," Kate replies, with a little moue that cost her all her spoil, for he caught her round the waist and said, daintily,—

"You shall pay toll, sweet wifey, for beating your lord and master," kissing her rosebud lips fondly, then releasing her and helping to gather her scattered treasures.

"I will punish you dreadfully, sir," she says, archly. "You are very unruly, and I am quite shocked."

"I will promise never to offend again till the next time."

So they chatted and flirted like young lovers in the fresh spring afternoon, perfectly oblivious of Margery, who sat smiling contentedly, basking in their happiness and wedded love.

"So you are really and truly in love with Sefton, Kate?" says Margery, as, seated in the drawing-room after dinner, they are having their usual chat, while the Colonel enjoys his cigar and glass of claret.

"How can I help loving one who is so kind, tender and true! Why the mere thought of losing his love would kill me! When he is away from me I am miserable till I see his dear face again. He is a king among men in my estimation."

"How happy I am, dear, to hear this. You will never know the comfort it is to me to see

you settled a perfect paragon of matrons! Suppose you apply for the slice of bacon, both of you? I will be one of the chief witnesses, to prove that not even a storm in a teacup has occurred to mar your domestic peace."

"I don't think I should care to enter the lists, for something tells me it would be salt—and I dislike salt—and Sefton is rather partial to that stinging condiment. Who knows that might be the commencement of a breeze!" tapping the fender-bar with her tiny satin foot, and looking very wise.

"Jack Sprat and his wife of famous renown got on beautifully," laughs Margery, "because of their difference of taste—one liked the fat, the other the lean, so between them they enjoyed it all."

"Yes, that was because there were two parts to choose from. Now if one slice of bacon was salt there would be nothing for one to choose from at all, consequently we should argue on the merits of salt, and quarrel to a certainty!"

"You were fitted for a lawyer. What a pity you were not a boy instead of the most irresistible, teasing sister in the world," caressing the tapering fingers sparkling with gems, where the plain gold band shone out clear and vivid amongst them, as if to say, "I am chief of all, for I am an emblem of love eternal."

That evening passed as others had, in peace and sweet home comfort. There was not a cloud in their bright horizon; all was serene and calm; and Margery basked in their sunshine—she was their reflector.

Summer had come again with its fruits, flowers, and golden glories, and mourning was put aside—that is, the outward garb, not their hearts; fresh flowers woven into wreaths by Margery and Kate, were placed lovingly every morning on the General's tomb—no matter what weather they were never forgotten.

The Abbey began now to look gay; silvery laughter sounded in the corridor and rooms in the house; everywhere fragrant perfume from choice cigars came across you on the terraces from the smoking-room and rustic houses in the grounds.

Colonel and Mrs. Ponsonby were fairly launched in their new life, and threw the fine old Abbey open to their friends right hospitably.

"We shall have quite a gay party, my dear," says the Colonel, cheerfully, helping himself to a filleted sole, and commencing to eat with a keen appetite. "I have counted the letters, and it seems to me that everybody has accepted your invitation. We will open them after breakfast. My morning walk makes me as hungry as a hunter. The top of the morning to you, mouse!" jumping up and placing her at the table tenderly. "Why, I do think you steal the dew from the roses! You have a colour very like this one in my buttonhole."

"What a dangerous person you must be among the ladies, Sefton! You are the most dreadful flatterer I ever knew," laughed Margery. "You will have to have eyes like lynxes, Kate, when all these pretty girls arrive."

"I will depute you to be my lynx; but mind you are never to sleep during duty, or I shall dismiss you from my service!" says Mrs. Ponsonby, jocularly.

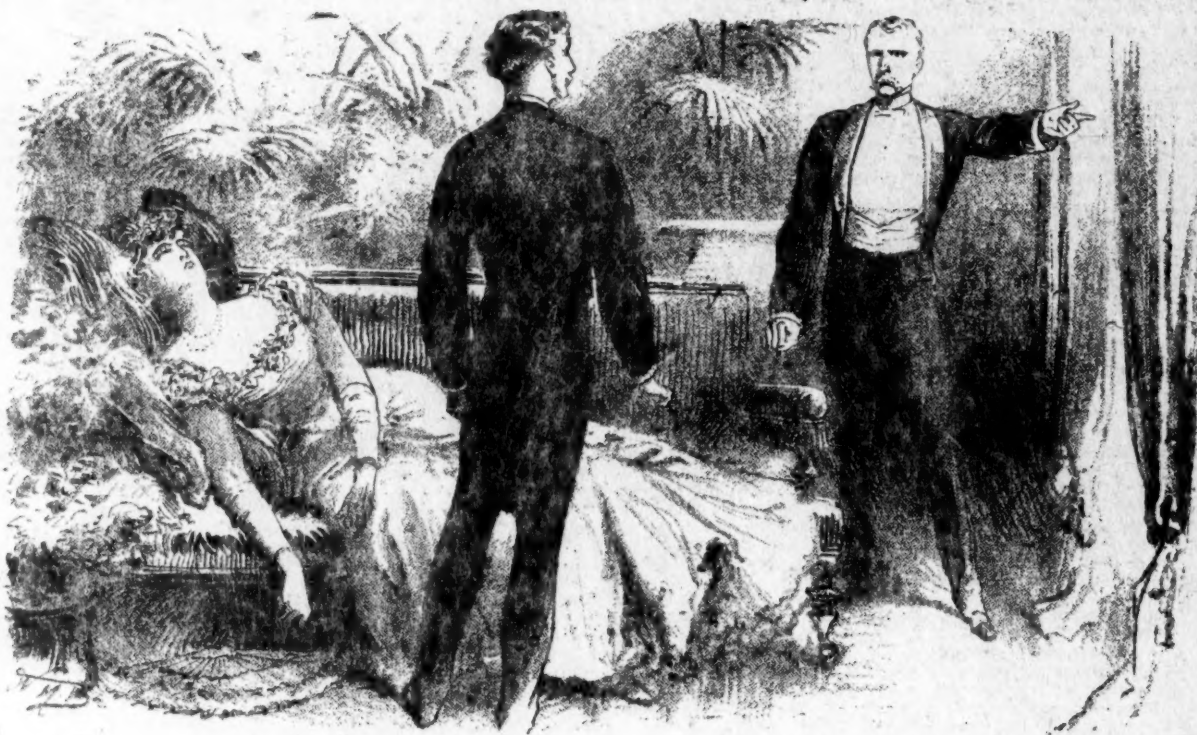
"Oh! by-the-bye, I have news! I was so starved out that I forgot everything," helping himself to anchovy toast. "I met your old friend Fitzgerald up by the old mill. He was trying his hand at angling."

The colour forsook Kate's face—in a moment all the radiance was gone.

"Oh!" she falters, her lips seemingly frozen.

"Yes," continued the Colonel. "He tells me he has been away somewhere in Italy, and has been fortunate enough to get a picture hung at the Academy. Knowing he was such an old friend I gave him an open invitation, and told him about our ball."

"He seemed positively delighted to renew old relations. No wonder, when a fellow has been leading a Bohemian life, knocking about the world; it seems like a glimpse of paradise to return to civilisation and charming women's society."



COLONEL PONSONBY POINTED TO THE BALL-ROOM, PERMISSORILY, ALMOST MENACINGLY.

"Thank Heaven!" murmurs Margery, "he never noticed my darling's pallor!"

"Why did you ask him here, Setton?" Kate stammers. "I—I don't care for bachelors."

"What on earth are all our pretty girls to do if you coop them up here with Benedicts?" he says, looking for the first time over to his wife, whose face was as white as her morning robe.

"Dearest Kate, you are not well," he remarks, concernedly. "What is the matter? You were looking as bright as a June rose a few moments back."

"It is close, and my head aches," she falters, leaving the table and going to the open casement to hide her agitation. "I shall be all right in a minute," with a faint little smile, as she took the fan and smelling salts from her husband's hand, and allowed him to place her on a couch. "Go on with your breakfast; I will join you presently."

Somehow he did not return to the table with that bright happy look of a few short minutes ago.

There seemed a cloud—a sudden cold wave, as it were, over the domestic atmosphere.

"So he is coming to the ball, you were saying, Setton?" she pursues.

"Yes, he said he would. But don't distress yourself to talk; I will tell you presently."

"I am better now. It was a sudden little faintness."

"I never noticed you like it before," looking at her keenly. "Well, as you are all right, I'll proceed. I have asked him to paint a picture of you."

"Surely you never were mad enough as to—"

"What?" he returns, gazing at her with amazement, his voice strangely metallic.

"Kate means that he is not a portrait-painter, and she is naturally alarmed at being perhaps caricatured," said Margery, coming to her sister's aid.

"Yes, that was it. You see, I am rather vain,"

she stammers, taking Margery's cue, and carrying it out.

"Oh!" he replies, "then you need be under no misapprehension on that account, for that is his forte. It appears that this picture is Lady Diana Percy's portrait, and is making a perfect furor, from all accounts. I read a long, flattering leader about it in the *Times*, little dreaming it was our young artist who used to hang with such touching devotion over you when singing."

Further conversation was happily interrupted by a telegram from the Colonel's Welsh estate about some mine that his agent was working.

"Why did you act so strangely, Kate?" says Margery, half angrily, when they were alone. "You have positively vexed me. Your husband could not help noticing your too apparent agitation, it was so marked. Surely Frank is nothing to you now!"

"Don't reproach me!" she cries, passionately.

"I could not help it for the moment; it came so suddenly, and I had forgotten all about him. He had gone out of my life, I had vainly thought. Indeed, it is no use looking so cruel. I don't care one brass farthing for him, only it for a moment brought back the old life that has lain buried, forgotten."

"Heaven help you, poor darling!" she says, with a feeling of remorse for her unkind words. "I trust, for both your sakes, it is buried, never to be resuscitated. But, if you value your husband's love, you will never act again as you did just now. I feel sure he attributed your sudden illness to its right cause. I saw a strange, cold gleam in his kind eyes, and a quivering about his lips. And, oh! Kate, my precious darling, do not break his heart! He loves you truly, so all absorbingly, that to doubt you would kill him."

"Doubt me!" she says, with proud, flashing eyes. "You surely do not mean, Margery, he, my husband, could do that? Better I were laid out yonder beside dear mother and uncle than to see his face shadowed by doubts. No, he will never have cause for even an atom of that. I

shall never forget I am his honoured wife, whose faith is as firm as the rock of ages," raising her truthful eyes to Heaven to bear witness to her asseveration.

"Forgive me, Kate! I am more than satisfied," pleads Margery, humbly. "If I have said aught that is wrong ascribe it to my intense anxiety for your happiness, and over-zealous affection."

"I do, dear," kissing her affectionately. "Now I am ready to receive a dozen Franks. Never fear that my face will lose its colour again."

The blaze of countless lights, the fragrance of innumerable flowers, the ravishing strains of a perfect band, the rustle of silks and fluttering of gauze and soft net robes, the patter of little satin and kid-shod feet, ravishing whispers from sweet lips, the bewildering sparkle of brown and blue eyes.

Moving through like a fairy queen is Kate, decked in glistening cream satin, wrought with pearls; crimson roses are scattered on her dress in rich clusters, and on her bosom; and one fastened by a diamond anchor lays in her golden coils, that fall gracefully to the nape of her swan-like neck.

"Will you favour me, Mrs. Ponsonby?" taking her programme, and pencilling the next waltz.

"Certainly; but it is impossible to give you that one," crossing it off decisively.

"Why?" says Frank Fitzgerald. "That one was not marked," reproachfully.

"There is no need for my husband to place his name down. You see I have reserved it for him."

(Continued on page 259.)

We would call the attention of our readers to an advertisement on another page offering some wonderful bargains in handkerchiefs, which are worthy of their notice.



GERARD STAGGERED BACK, HIS EYES HALF-BLIND BY A CLOUD OF FINE DUST.

THE HEIRESS OF WYNDCLIFF.

—30—

CHAPTER X.

SUSPENSE.

"Mr news," said Sir Richard, "does not amount to much. Still it may provide you with a clue. In our agitation yesterday we did not notice the absence of Mr. Transome, but as a matter of fact he was away all day, and has not yet returned. When I first observed that he was not here I caused inquiries to be made, and I find that he was seen driving along the high-road, away from the Castle, between the hours of eleven and twelve o'clock."

"The exact time of Elaine's disappearance!" exclaimed Carew, interrupting him.

The Baronet nodded.

"Yes, that was the point that struck me, and that is why I said we might find a clue."

"Who saw Transome?"

"No less a person than Mr. Jeffreys, the Vicar, who was walking along the road on his way home, when a close carriage dashed past him at such a rate that his attention was at once attracted. He looked up, and caught a glimpse of Transome's face at the window. The glimpse was only momentary, but he recognised him instantly, as he had sat next him at dinner only an evening or two ago. He says Mr. Transome looked white and anxious, as if he had something on his mind."

The police inspector, who had been listening attentively while Sir Richard spoke, flashed a quick glance at Carew.

"Did the Vicar say if Mr. Transome was the only occupant of the carriage, Sir Richard?" he inquired.

"I asked him that question myself, but he was unable to answer it with certainty. He says he only saw one person, clearly, but he fancied there was a second."

"Did he give you any description of the carriage?"

"He said it was an ordinary brougham, whether a private one, or from a livery stables, he could not tell—indeed, it dashed past him at such a rate that he had hardly time to notice anything."

"That looks queer," observed Raven. "This gentleman—Mr. Transome—was a guest of yours?"

"Yes. He has been staying with me for some days past."

"And did you know he contemplated leaving so soon?"

"I had not an idea of it. On the contrary, I imagined he would stay for another week. Why he should have departed so hastily I cannot even surmise."

"Unless his departure is in some way connected with that of Miss Wyndcliff," remarked Raven, shrewdly. "By the way—you must pardon my asking the question, but under the circumstances I have no alternative—was this gentleman an admirer of Miss Wyndcliff?"

A faint flush stained the waxen pallor of the Baronet's cheek.

"He wished to marry her."

"Ah! And did she encourage his addresses?"

"No. She refused to listen to them." It galled Sir Richard terribly to have to make these confessions to a stranger, but after all, Elaine's welfare must be his first consideration, and it was clear Raven attached a good deal of importance to this new development of the situation.

"Our next step," said the inspector, after a pause, "must be to find out where the brougham took Mr. Transome to, and whether he had a companion. My own impression is that he was going to the station at W—, in time to catch the London train at twelve o'clock, and I shall hurry over there to make inquiries. It is a most unheard of thing for a guest to leave a house in such an abrupt fashion, unless he has a very powerful motive for getting away as quickly as possible."

This was quite true, and neither Sir Richard

nor Carew could gainsay it. Both indeed were inclined to think Transome's absence at the same time as Elaine's meant more than a mere coincidence. Was it possible the man had been so desperately in love with her that rather than run the risk of losing her he had forcibly carried her off?

Such things had been—and will be again, in spite of nineteenth century civilization. Love, when he takes possession of a man's senses, hesitates at nothing, and though Transome did not look like a person who would be carried away by such a violent passion, experience teaches us the impossibility of judging our fellow-creature's characters with any sort of certainty when they are under the influence of the blind god's magic!

Raven lost no time in setting-out for W—. Carew wished to accompany him, but this the inspector would not allow. He could pursue his inquiries much better by himself, he said, and Gerard was, of course, bound to submit to his decision, especially as he was upheld in it by Sir Richard himself.

"You had better go to bed and get a few hours' sleep," said the Baronet, kindly, as he observed the young man's haggard face. "You look as if you wanted it."

This was indeed the case; but though Carew so far obeyed his host's wishes as to throw himself on his couch, his mind was too full of anxious thoughts for sleep to visit his tired eyelids. He could do nothing until Raven's return, except work out every theory that might account for Elaine's disappearance; but the worst of it was, not one of these theories was satisfactory.

Suddenly there flashed across him those enigmatic words spoken by Heera, "When you have need of me, you will seek me." Would it, he wondered, be any good going to her now? A minute afterwards he laughed at the idea. In what manner was it possible she could help him?

A few hours later he was downstairs again,

waiting on the terrace for Raven's arrival. When the inspector finally appeared a glance into his face showed that his mission had been a failure.

"Could not find out a word about this Mr. Transome," he said, with an air of vexation, in answer to Carew's inquiries. "I questioned every official at the station, and not one appears to have noticed him. It seems there was an agricultural show on yesterday; in consequence of which the trains were all very full, and the station thronged with excursionists, so that it is really not surprising I should be unable to trace the gentleman. Still, I am disappointed; I've had a lost journey."

"What do you propose to do next?" asked Carew, who was to the full as disappointed as his companion.

"Find out from Sir Richard where Mr. Transome lives, and try to track him in that way."

"But if—?" Gerard hesitated and bit his lips hard before pronouncing the words, "if things are as you suspect, Transome would not go to his own home."

"No; but I might discover from his servants what his habits are, and where I should be likely to find him."

At that moment there came the sound of wheels crushing the gravel of the drive, and both men turned simultaneously, and saw a cab approaching, the horse looking as if he had been driven hard, and before the vehicle drew up in front of the house the door was thrown open, and a man jumped out.

"Good Heavens! It is Transome himself!" exclaimed Gerard, excitedly, taking a few steps forward, while the police inspector repeated the words under his breath.

"Surprised to see me, ain't you?" said the new comer, tossing half a sovereign to the cabman, and coming up to Carew with outstretched hand. "Thought I had gone off my head to bolt away as I did yesterday morning, eh!" He laughed good-humouredly, and spoke with his usual debonnaire manner. "Never was so sold in all my life. Thought I had posted a letter to Sir Richard explaining matters last night, and then found it in my pocket this morning. It isn't often my memory plays me tricks of that sort. However, I decided there would not be much harm done if I caught the mail train back, and here I am!"

There he was most certainly, with his thick watch chain and heavy seals, his ruddy face and brown whiskers. As he spoke, he pulled out a large silk handkerchief, and mopped his brow. Then something in Carew's expression seemed to strike him as strange, and he said sharply,—

"What's the matter—why do you look at me as if I were a natural curiosity?"

"Because you have been the subject of very considerable curiosity, not to say anxiety," returned Gerard, keeping his eyes fixed on the new comer. "May I ask what made you leave the Castle so abruptly yesterday?"

Transome's red face grew redder. He began to bluster like an enraged Turkey cock. "You may ask, but I'm hanged if I see what right you have to do so!" he exclaimed, angrily. "I'm not answerable to you for my comings and goings, am I?"

"You are not; and under ordinary conditions I shouldn't be in the smallest degree interested in them," Gerard replied, shrugging his shoulders; "but as your hurried departure may throw some light on what has become of Miss Wyndeliff, I have the strongest possible motive for demanding this explanation."

His tone was so far from conciliatory that, Raven—who had listened in ill-disguised anxiety to this dialogue—now came forward and pushed Gerard gently on one side.

Mr. Carew might be a famous traveller and a clever man, but the inspector did not think much of his powers as a detective.

"The fact is, sir," said Raven, in a quietly matter-of-fact tone, addressing himself to Transome, "we should be very glad to know where you took Miss Wyndeliff when you drove away from here yesterday morning."

If the surprise on Transome's face were not genuine he was certainly a first-rate actor.

"Where I took Miss Wyndeliff? Where the

deuce should I take her! You are both mad, I think—or drunk," he exclaimed contemptuously.

"For my part, I haven't the ghost of an idea what you mean. I think I had better go straight to Sir Richard, and let him know the sort of welcome I have received. Perhaps he may have a word to say about it—later on."

There was a veiled threat in his tone. He spoke like a player who holds the trump card concealed—a fact which the inspector's quick ear immediately noted.

Raven was a sharp-witted man, and he saw that a good deal of diplomacy would be necessary in dealing with this gentleman.

"I beg your pardon, sir—don't go to Sir Richard just yet, until you have heard what has happened," he entreated, laying a detaining hand on the other's sleeve. "I believe I am right in saying you left Wyndeliff between eleven and twelve o'clock yesterday morning?"

"Well?"

"Well, sir, Miss Elaine Wyndeliff disappeared exactly about that time, and we naturally supposed you might assist us in finding where she had gone."

Transome's colour faded slightly. He shook himself free from Raven, and looked from him to Carew.

"Miss Elaine disappeared! That is a most extraordinary statement. Do you mean to say she can't be found?"

"She can't be found, and she has not left a clue by which she may be traced. Are we to take it that you, sir, don't know her present whereabouts?"

"No more than the man in the moon! I fully expected to find her here. Even now I cannot believe she has deserted her home."

Once more he took out his handkerchief and wiped his brow.

Raven's eyes never left his face. Was he speaking the truth or not? The tones of his voice seemed genuine enough; but there was a latent uneasiness in the furtive expression of his eyes.

"So," added the inspector, "you will see, Mr. Transome, that as you and the young lady left the Castle at the same hour, you might easily be supposed to know something of each other's movements?"

"I left quite unexpectedly," returned Transome, after a slight hesitation. "As you may be aware, I am connected with a large financial business in London, and yesterday morning my manager found that my presence was imperatively necessary in town; so in order to save time he came down to W— by the early morning mail, wired for a carriage to be in readiness, and drove straight here. As chance would have it I was taking a stroll and met the carriage before it reached the Castle, and the case being urgent I jumped in, and we drove back and caught the twelve o'clock train. As I told you before, I wrote a few lines to Sir Richard explaining all this, but forgot to post the note. I saw Miss Wyndeliff at breakfast yesterday, but have not set eyes on her since. That, so far as I am concerned, is a true version of the case."

He glared, half-defiantly, at Carew as he finished, and then with a nod at the police officer thrust his hands in his pockets and walked across the terrace to the Castle entrance.

"Well?" queried Carew, in a low tone, as he disappeared. "What is your opinion now, Mr. Raven, is his story a tissue of lies or not?"

"Blessed if I know, sir," admitted the inspector, scratching his head in a puzzled manner. "It sounds specious enough, but there was something about it I didn't quite like either. He seemed very much upset too; but then, if he was in love with the young lady that would account for it. Perhaps we had better go indoors and see Sir Richard and let him know Mr. Transome is back."

As they entered the hall they were greeted by the sight of Transome and Hilliard apparently in earnest conversation. They stood together in the embrasure of the window and were speaking in so low a tone that it hardly rose above a whisper.

At the sight of the other two men their discussion ceased immediately.

"Look here, sir," said Raven, drawing Gerard into the library, "it's as likely as not those two are in collusion. From the very first I haven't liked the look of that secretary—he's a deep one, or I'm very much mistaken! Now I can't watch them both, but I think I can manage one if you'll undertake the other, and if we both keep a sharp look out it's ten to one we discover something. What do you think?"

"I agree with you entirely. If you'll keep an eye on Transome I'll do my best to get up level with that dark-skinned Hilliard, and if I let him slip through my fingers—well, I'm not so cuts as I think myself, that's all!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE SECRETARY SCORES.

Two days passed away without bringing any elucidation of the mystery. Accounts of Miss Wyndeliff's strange disappearance were circulated in all the newspapers, the county police, and even the Scotland-yard authorities were communicated with, but so far without result. Raven had hoped that with all this publicity some tidings at least would be forthcoming but he was disappointed. From the moment Elaine had been seen by the butler passing through the hall no one had apparently set eyes on her.

Sir Richard's distress was terrible to witness. He had fully made up his mind that foul play had overtaken his daughter. If she were living he declared her presence could not be so entirely hidden.

To this theory, however, Raven still dissented. He argued that it was easier to conceal a living person than a dead one—but as a matter of fact he was, as he had already told Carew, inclined to believe Elaine was keeping out of the way of her own free will. More than this, he was of opinion that she had not left the neighbourhood.

"If she had done so," he said to Gerard, "we should be pretty sure to hear of her in some way or other. Beautiful young ladies always attract a certain amount of attention wherever they go, and even in the crowds that the agricultural show brought to the county Miss Wyndeliff's golden-haired fairness would not pass unnoticed. No, I am ready to wager that if you draw a two mile circle round Wyndeliff Castle you would find her somewhere within the radius."

"Then why not search every mansion and cottage in the county?" demanded Gerard, energetically.

Raven shook his head.

"That would be impossible. An Englishman's house is his castle, and he would deeply resent any forced entrance. Besides, in order to do as you suggest, I should have to get a warrant, and it would not be granted me on the very insufficient evidence I could offer. Still, I don't think it is possible for her to leave the county without being observed—all the police are on the look-out, and the reward that has been offered is in itself sufficient inducement to make people keen."

Transome and Hilliard both professed to take the deepest possible interest in the inquiries that had been set on foot, and offered their aid in assisting them. True to his word, Carew kept a strict watch on the secretary, especially at night. What rest he had he took in the day; after retiring to his room he would remove his boots, and then sit at his window with the blind drawn down, and a small hole cut in it, through which he was enabled to see the terrace below. His door was invariably ajar, and at the slightest sound in the corridor outside he was on the alert.

On the third night after Elaine's disappearance he was sitting there, when his ear was caught by the faint sound of a muffled footstep—so faint that only sense strained to the highest possible point could have distinguished it. Very cautiously he stole to the door. Yes, someone was passing it, or rather, someone seemed to be pausing near it, listening to hear if there was any movement from within. Gerard fancied he could hear suppressed breathing. A minute

later there came a slight tap, and the door was pushed gently open.

"Mr. Carew—are you awake?" whispered the voice of the secretary. "Ah!" as he entered and stumbled against the crouching figure of Gerard. "I see I need not apologise for disturbing you. There is someone outside in the garden—it looks to me like the figure of a woman. Shall we go down and see who it is?"

Gerard was by no means pleased to have his tactics discovered, but he thought it wisest to accept the situation without comment, and although he felt more than half-convinced that this was some trap set for him by Hilliard, he at once answered the secretary's question in the affirmative, and taking his boots in his hand followed him downstairs. At the foot of the stairs Hilliard paused.

"Before letting our selves out of the house, let us reconnoitre from the hall window," he said, "and then we shall see if the woman is still there. It is no good starting off on a wild goose chase."

He led the way to the deep bay of the window, the upper portion of which was filled with stained glass.

An intense stillness reigned throughout the house, and seemed to be shared by the landscape outside. It was a lovely starlit night, the outline of trees and shrubs being distinctly visible against the sky.

"Ah, there she is still!" exclaimed the secretary, in an eager whisper, pointing to a clump of bushes on the lawn below the terrace, "do you see her?"

Following his outstretched finger Gerard was able to distinguish a darkly-draped female form standing motionless in front of some lilac bushes. Her face was upturned, but her fingers shaded her eyes, so that it was impossible to see her features. She appeared to be gazing very attentively at some part of the house.

"She is looking at your window," added Hilliard, with a half-veiled malice in his tone, "do you know who she is?"

"If I don't know I can soon find out," returned Carew, "come along, we will go out through the little postern door."

"You had better be quiet, or meanwhile she may make her escape," was Hilliard's remark, as both young men let themselves on the terrace. "I think we shall do well to separate, and then skirt round the plantation so as to advance close upon her from right and left before she sees us."

Carew agreed in the wisdom of this suggestion, and they were enabled to get within twenty yards of the mysterious visitor ere she became aware of their vicinity.

Then one of them trod on a twig, which cracked rather noisily, with the result that she turned quickly round, and instantly flitted away amongst the thickly-planted trees of the shrubbery.

Whether she had seen them or not it was difficult to say, but she was evidently alarmed, and bent on escaping.

"Perhaps it is Miss Wyndeliff herself!" said Hilliard, breathing hard in his excitement, and Carew, fired by the idea, dashed into the plantation, forgetful of everything else in anxiety to overtake the retreating woman.

Hilliard kept up with him for some little time, then slackened his pace, and finally stood still, a wicked smile curving his thin lips.

"Fool!" he muttered, "did he think he could get the better of me so easily, did he think I did not suspect he was watching me? The next time he comes to his door, and listens to see who is in the passage he must take care not to have cracked strong cigars beforehand. Their scent betrays him."

Meanwhile Gerard found his task of overtaking the lady less easy than he had imagined. For some time he could not find her in the denseness of the shrubbery; but at last he made out her dark drapery, stealing silently along, silently, but so swiftly that she had reached the park long before he had, and when he finally emerged from the shrubs he saw her some distance in advance, flying down the avenue with footstep that literally hardly seemed to touch the ground.

Not only did she seem to know her way per-

fectly, but she took advantage of every patch of shadow with a skill, showing that in spite of pursuit she still kept all her wits about her.

The conviction that it must be Elaine gained on Gerard. Who else would be likely to stand gazing up at his window? Was it possible the anxiety the poor girl had lately gone through had turned her brain, and Raven's theory that she was wilfully hiding herself was a correct one?

Now at last, out here in the open, he was gaining upon her—yes, rapidly. Fleet as she was, his long legs covered the ground at a quicker rate than she could keep up, and in a few more minutes he would be level with her.

Apparently she knew this, although she had not once looked behind. Quite suddenly she turned round and raised her arm; a small bright object glinted in her hand. There was a faint report, and Gerard staggered back, his eyes half-blinded by a cloud of fine dust.

For a moment he thought he had been shot. He put his hand to his face, expecting to find it covered with blood; but this proved not to be the case, and in a very little time he had wiped the dust away, and discovered that he was none the worse for it with the exception of a slight irritation of his eyelids.

Evidently the weapon, whatever it was, had been discharged less with the purpose of hurting him than to make him pause in his pursuit. And this purpose had been achieved, for the girl—it was clear she must be young from her extreme activity—was now entering the little wood where Elaine had met with her adventure with the panther.

"By Heavens you shall not escape me!" Gerard muttered between his clenched teeth, and once more he set out to follow her—oblivious of the fact that Hilliard was no longer with him.

On and on he went, darting round trees, crushing through the brushwood, and yet the black-robed figure kept steadily in advance until the grey wall surrounding the "Rookery" came in sight, and then her speed slackened and Gerard gained on her so much, that it was quite clear he must now overtake her.

But he did not succeed in doing so until she had reached the iron clamped door with its rusty hanging bell, through which the mistress of the Rookery had let him out some days ago. Then her strength seemed spent, and as he seized her arm she sank against the door as if for support, while at the same time drawing the black drapery more closely round her face.

Gerard, however, was in no mood to be trifled with, or to let considerations for her evident desire to escape recognition withhold him from discovering her identity. Holding her firmly with one hand he forcibly tore the veil from her face with the other, and as he saw her features a sharp exclamation burst from his lips,—

"Heera!"

She turned upon him half defiantly, half haughtily.

"Yes, it is I—Heera, whom you have been chasing. Do you think it was well to run a defenceless woman to earth in this manner?"

Gerard, remembering the weapon she evidently carried with her, thought the word "defenceless" misplaced, but he prudently refrained from saying so. He was bitterly disappointed in his discovery. Up to the last moment he had hoped his captive would prove to be Elaine.

"I am very sorry to have occasioned you distress," he said, humbly. "I had no idea it was you."

A swift expression of what looked like disappointment passed across her face, but vanished instantly. Hitherto she had been leaning against the pillar of the gate; now, however, she drew herself upright, and seemed to have quite recovered her self-possession.

"For whom did you take me?" she asked, looking at him keenly.

But Carew was not to be "drawn" so easily, and evaded the question.

"It was impossible for me to guess who you were. I saw you in the Castle grounds, and my curiosity was awakened, so I followed you."

"And I suppose you are wondering what brought me there at this time of night?"

"Well, yes. I must admit that your choice of midnight for your visit seemed a strange one."

She flushed deeply—a bright red flush that burned in throat and brow—and for a moment did not answer. Then she said in a different voice, lower and more gentle,—

"I acknowledge my visit was a strange one, but it admits of an interpretation that will rob it of its strangeness, and that explanation shall be given you—in due season."

"Why not now? There is no time like the present."

"I am too fatigued, and I require rest. By to-morrow I shall be recovered."

"Does that mean that I may come and see you to-morrow?"

"Yes, if you wish to do so. It must be in the evening."

"And you will tell me the reason that brought you to the Castle?"

Again that deep flush, and a lowering of the richly fringed eyelids.

"I will tell you—if you still desire to know."

She held out her hand to him as a signal of departure. He took it in his rather awkwardly, and after a moment's hesitation raised it to his lips, and then turned away, and hastily retraced his footsteps, feeling somehow as if he had been within an ace of grasping the key to the mystery that perplexed him, and yet had contrived to miss it.

Perhaps Heera's explanation would place it in his hands. He wondered what the explanation would be. The motive that brought this beautiful, regal-looking woman to play the spy—for it was in this light he was inclined to regard her conduct—must be a powerful one, and he could not even guess its nature.

Gerard's first impulse on entering the Castle was to look round for Hilliard, but the secretary was nowhere to be seen. A visit to his bedroom showed that he was not there, and Carew came downstairs again, determining to await his return. Meanwhile he secured the fastenings of all the lower doors and windows, so that Hilliard should not be able to steal a march on him, and come in unperceived, and having done this he seated himself in the embrasure of the hall window, well screened by the heavy drapery of the curtains, and on the alert for the slightest sound.

He had stayed thus for an hour or more, when to his great surprise he saw the figure of Hilliard standing in the middle of the hall, dimly visible in the darkness.

"How on earth did you get in?" he exclaimed, starting up in his astonishment.

"Get in! by the postern door, of course—the way I went out—was the matter-of-fact reply, given, however, with a faint flavour of satire, as if the speaker enjoyed his questioner's evident discomfiture.

"But the postern door is locked! I locked it myself when I entered."

"I suppose I must have come in before you then—that's all."

"But where have you been in the meantime?"

"In the library. I intended waiting for your arrival, but I dropped asleep, and only woke a few minutes ago. Well, did you succeed in tracking the lady?"

"Yes"—shortly.

"And finding out who she was?"

"Yes"—again.

Hilliard looked at him for a few minutes in silence, then, shrugging his shoulders slightly, he said,—

"Would it be indiscreet to ask any further questions?"

"Very," Gerard rejoined, knitting his dark brows together. "I think, Mr. Hilliard, the best thing for both of us now will be to go to bed."

"I quite agree. Good night—or rather good morning"—and the secretary began to ascend the stairs, leaving Carew with an uncomfortable impression of having been fooled. Of course he could not declare that Hilliard's story was not true, and that he had not been in the library all this time, but he was strongly of opinion this was not the case. Of Heera's presence in the grounds

there could be no doubt, and the secretary had taken advantage of the fact to start Gerard off in pursuit, while he followed some device of his own—which from his manner Gerard judged he had brought to a successful issue. How he had got into the Castle, or whether he had been in it all the time, it was impossible to say.

"In my inmost heart I believe the villain is at the bottom of Elaine's flight!" he muttered, and involuntarily he clenched his hands and set his teeth hard. "I will find some means of getting the truth from him, if I have to shake it out with his life! I will wait and hear what Heera says, because her explanation may possibly throw some light on the mystery, but afterwards . . . you had better beware, Mr. Secretary Hilliard! It is war to the knife between us!"

And he shook his fist in the direction of Hilliard's departing figure.

(To be continued.)

VIVIEN'S AWAKENING.

—101—

CHAPTER I.

VIVIEN! Vivien! cried a voice from the summer kitchen of an old farm-house that was perched like a robin's nest in a bower of green leaves on a sloping hill-side.

The bough of a peach-tree in an adjoining orchard quivered a little, a bright, raucy young face peeped out from the network of pink-and-white blossoms and green leaves, and answered back in a voice as sweet as a silver bell,—

"Wait just one little minute, Aunt Julia, I'll be there directly."

The pretty golden head of tumbled curls dodged back behind the thick screen of blossoms.

"Aunt Julia is always calling me just when I don't want to come," pouted pretty little Vivien North, vexedly; and as she spoke she drew out a little book from the hollow of the tree, where she had hastily thrust it when the rasping voice of her aunt startled her, and breathlessly turned over its mystical pages again.

The wonderful book—so captivating to pretty Vivien North, bore the romantic title,—

"The Young Girl's Dream-book; or, A Glance into the Future."

"He was so young and handsome in my dream," said Vivien, half aloud, her pretty pink cheeks flushing scarlet. "I wonder if I shall ever see anyone in real life with just such dark eyes that seemed to almost smile, and just such a face, like the dark, handsome picture of Romeo."

Faster and faster flew the little white hands over the mystical pages. Ah! here at last was what she was searching for.

"If a maiden dreams of a handsome stranger, who smiles upon her and calls her name, then instantly disappears, the dream is an evil omen to the dreamer, for if she be young and beautiful, her beauty will be her curse, and bring shame and disgrace. Hatred and jealousy will follow closely on the heels of love. Ere the month wanes, let the dreamer beware!"

And this was exactly what Vivien North had dreamed.

"I don't believe a single word of it," cried the impetuous little beauty, dashing two great tears from her lovely blue eyes. "I believe it is nothing but a cheat, for this horrid book is always predicting awful things for me. Nothing will happen to me ere the month wanes. I'm only wishing that something would."

Somehow the words she had just read rang in her ears,—

"Her beauty will be her curse, and bring shame and disgrace."

"Pshaw! I don't believe that either," muttered little Vivien turning her head sideways like a bird. "In all the books and nice papers that I have ever read girls who were pretty had plenty of adoring lovers, who obeyed their slightest wish—that must have been very nice indeed—and as

to disgrace, dear me, that's nothing new. I am always in disgrace for one thing or another."

Vivien laughed a merry, rollicking laugh that echoed back to the woman in the summer kitchen, bringing that angry matron to the door at once.

"Vivien, Vivien—are you coming?" she called, sharply. "Come here instantly. What keeps you all day long in that peach-tree! You're up to something, I'll warrant."

"I shall never look inside of this hateful book again for predicting such awful things for me," muttered Vivien, pettishly; and with one well-directed aim, whizz went the little dream-book through the pink-and-white boughs, landing far out in a little lake close by.

"I'm coming, Aunt Julia," she called, softly; and swinging as gracefully and daintily as a squirrel through the low-drooping, blossoming boughs to the green grass below, she waded ankle deep through the sweet pink clover to where her aunt, with an ugly scowl on her face which certainly boded ill to luckless little Vivien, sat on the dooretep paring a basket of rosy-checked apples.

"Your uncle Tom has just got home from town, and has brought a letter with him from a friend living there," said Mrs. Julia Nelson, crossly, "and it contains an invitation for either you or your cousin Clara to spend the summer there."

"Oh, Aunt Julia," cried Vivien, breathlessly, flinging herself down on the dooretep beside her, "let me go! Please let me go, aunt!"

"Why should I let you go instead of my own daughter Clara?" she demanded, angrily. "No, indeed; you shall stop at home. Dependent people like you, living off other people's charity, can't live the life of a lady; you ought to be glad to have a roof over your head, and a crust to eat."

All the dainty colour fled from Vivien North's lovely face as she sprang from her seat on the dooretep, her blue eyes flashing and her ripe-red lips quivering piteously.

"Heaven knows that if I knew how to do anything for myself I wouldn't be dependent upon your charity a day longer, Aunt Julia," she panted, sobbingly. "Ever since I can remember you have flung it in my face every hour in the day—that if it wasn't for you I'd be in the work-house."

"And it's true, too!" cried the spiteful voice of Clara Nelson. "If we didn't have to support you, father could have more money to spend on me, and I hate you for it! And I hate you worse than all for your pretty, rosy face," she muttered under her breath, darting a glance of hatred at the drooping little figure on the dooretep.

"Oh, dear," cried Mrs. Nelson, jumping up so hastily from the dooretep that her apples flew in all directions. "See, Vivien, the bars are down at the foot of the glen, and the cows are making for the corn. Run quickly down by the other path and head 'em off!"

And glad of any excuse to escape the volley of abuse which was just about to be launched at her little Vivien North—the dependent cousin—sped quickly down the primrose-bordered path, her poor little heart swelling bitterly, and her blue eyes fairly blinded with tears which rolled off her pink cheeks and buried themselves in the hearts of the violets at her feet as she flew along on her errand, which was leading her, on that bright July morning, to her fate.

At that moment the rosy flush of the morning sunlight fell full upon the handsome faces of two young men who were heading their trim little boat toward a group of willows that fringed the little lake.

"Upon my word, it seems to me we have stumbled on to a veritable fairy's bower!" cried Bertram Valentine, springing lightly from the skiff and flinging himself carelessly down under the trees.

No spot could have been lovelier. Around the trunks of the willows clematis and scarlet creepers clung in rich luxuriance, and masses of white and crimson passion-flowers rioted in the sunshine, filling the air with their odorous perfume.

Red poppies gleamed in the green grass,

coquetting with the tall white lilies lying on the still bosom of the silvery little stream.

"It is rather a charming spot," commented Cuthbert Leigh, following his companion's example, and flinging himself down at full length under the trees. "I should pity any fairy who might be unlucky enough to cross your path, Valentine, especially if she were young and pretty."

"Why?" asked Bertram Valentine, pushing back his dark curls from his broad white brow, his black eyes twinkling quizzically as he fanned himself with his broad straw hat. "I should rather enjoy the situation, I assure you, Leigh."

"You ought to be labelled *dangerous*," laughed Leigh, eyeing his graceful college chum, who was lying back so nonchalantly among the crimson flowers, ruthlessly plucking them with his white fingers, tearing them to pieces, and flinging them into the stream.

"Dangerous!" repeated Valentine, laughing softly. "What else, pray?"

"And fickle," exclaimed Leigh, tossing his friend a cigar and proceeding to light one himself.

"Anything else to add to the true bill?" inquired Valentine, bowing with mock courtesy.

"I might add, handsome as a prince and as heartless as a stone," laughed Leigh.

"I wish we had brought our guns and a lunch from the hotel," exclaimed Valentine, impatiently, turning the too personal subject. "This would be a capital place for a day's shooting. What do you say, Leigh, to our going back for them?"

"I wouldn't mind," assented Leigh, languidly. "—I'm agreeable."

"No one would imagine you were agreeable unless you informed them of that fact," retorted Valentine, maliciously.

At that instant a bird in full song swept over their heads, disappearing in the thicket beyond, and the crackling of the underbrush close by, fell upon their ears, and a fresh, sweet young voice cried out,—

"Oh, little bird, pity me! I am so very unhappy, and so lonely in this dreary place where nobody ever comes. If I had wings I'd fly away and never come back again!"

"You had better go back to the hotel after the guns," said Valentine, motioning his friend toward the skiff. "I'll wait for you here. You see, the fairy whom you warned me of is about to cross my path."

"You had better come with me, Valentine," urged Leigh, anxiously.

"It's rather late in the day for you to commence preaching to me in that fashion, although I were a sinner or a trifer," retorted Valentine, shrugging his shoulders. "I am quite determined to catch a glimpse of my fairy; she must be young, judging from her voice."

"Take care, my dear Valentine," laughed Leigh. "You had better be off with the old love before you are on with the new."

He stepped lightly into the skiff as he spoke, took up the oars, and with a few measured strokes was soon lost to sight.

"Now for a glance at my fairy," thought Valentine, rising indolently to his feet.

The words had scarcely fallen from his lips ere a young girl, fairer than a poet's dream, bounded gracefully through the network of crimson blossoms to the edge of the thicket where our handsome hero stood—a young girl with a cluster of pansies in her hand. It was pretty little Vivien North—she had come to fix up the bars.

"Good heaven's!" thought Valentine, taking in at a glance the rare beauty of the little creature before him—with her tumbled, disordered golden curls, sky-blue eyes, and lovely scarlet mouth. "It is a sin for such a little beauty to be hidden here."

Her pretty little feet were buried ankle deep in the violet-studded grass, and her broad sun-hat—with a wreath of pansies around it—was tilted back from a faultless pink-and-white dimpled face that would have charmed any beauty-loving artist.

"I hope I have not frightened you," said Valentine, jauntily raising his hat from his dark curls, and bowing with that courteous, winning

grace that always had such a pleasing effect upon fluttering feminine hearts.

A low cry of dismay broke from the parted crimson lips, and the pretty face flushed in the most delightful girlish confusion, as the dark, magnetic eyes met and held her own for one brief instant.

"Oh, I remember just where I have seen such a dark, handsome, smiling face," she thought, shrinking back a step or two. "It is the face of the handsome hero I saw in my dreams, and of whom that awful little dream-book warned me to beware."

But, ah me! young hearts are heedless of warnings. Love goes where it is sent, in spite of all the warnings in the world. And Vivien North stood face to face with her fate.

Valentine had heard the people thereabouts often mention the name Clara Nelson—the farmer's daughter—and he told himself this was certainly Clara, fairer than all fancy had painted her.

"I hope I have not startled you," he repeated, apologetically. "I am addressing Miss Clara Nelson, am I not? Allow me to waive formality by introducing myself. I am your neighbour for the present, stopping at the hotel on the other side of the lake."

As he spoke he extended his card, and she read the name,—

"Bertram Valentine, Oxtou."

"I am not Clara Nelson," said Vivien, blushing still more confusedly. "I—I—am only Vivien North, her cousin."

"Vivien North," repeated Valentine. "That sounds like a poem—so sweet and pretty, but it is not one half as pretty as its owner," he added, with mischievous gallantry. But Vivien had turned to fly from him.

CHAPTER II.

FATE was kind to gay, fascinating Bertram Valentine.

As Vivien turned to fly from him the breeze coyly lifted her sun-hat that was tilted down over her pretty curls, and carried it directly to Bertram's feet.

In a moment he had gallantly stooped to recover it, delighted at the opportunity it afforded him of speaking with the little fairy.

"Please allow me to return your hat, Miss Vivien," he said in his fatally winning voice, with an irresistible glance full of admiration, passion, and fire that seemed to flash from his magnetic eyes to hers.

Vivien took the hat with a smile. "Thank you, sir," and as she passed over the hat by the blue ribbons his hand accidentally brushed hers, and Vivien blushed again rosier than before, as she turned hastily away.

"Do not leave me," he implored, eagerly, "or I shall think you have not forgiven me for intruding upon your grounds. You must also pardon me for overhearing your pathetic appeal to the bird yonder that you were so lonely, and I sympathise with you with all my heart, for I had really believed I was the only lonely and unhappy person under the sun."

"I never dreamed anyone would hear what I said," faltered Vivien, coyly drooping her pretty blue eyes; "so few people ever come here. I do not think I have seen ten strangers in my whole life, for I have never been away from this farm. I must go now," she added, with an air of embarrassment. "My aunt and my uncle would be very angry with me if they knew I had stopped to talk with a stranger. I could never come to the lake alone again."

"Then they must never know of it," replied Valentine, promptly. "It will be quite a bit of romance to keep it from them. I am stopping at the hotel on the other side of the lake," he explained.

Vivien raised her eyes, and Valentine, so worldly wise, smiled as he read the undisguised pleasure that Vivien never dreamed was revealed in them.

"To tell you the truth, Miss Vivien," he went

on, "a college chum and myself were enjoying a little lark all to ourselves up at Oxtou, and somehow it leaked out and reached our professor's ears. Well, the upshot of the whole matter was my friend and I were suspended for a month and came here. Yesterday I was deeply deploring my situation; but now—with another glance from his thrilling eyes—"I quite believe fate drifted me here; for if I had the hope of meeting you here often in this romantic bower this month would be the happiest month of my whole life. Won't you give me one of those pancies—just one?" he asked, softly.

Vivien handed him one of the flowers, utterly at a loss what to say to this handsome stranger; and her foolish little heart thrilled as it had never thrilled before, as she saw him gracefully raise it in his white hand and press it to his lips.

"When I am dying, Miss Vivien, this pansy will be found lying on my heart," he said, softly. "Pray sit down on this mossy log," he entreated, earnestly, "and give me just five minutes more, please; and with heart fluttering like a bird's, all unmindful of the cows that were trampling down the corn, and rioting amid the spoils in the meadow hard by, Vivien shyly sat down.

Young, handsome, and eloquent, Valentine knew that he was dangerously fascinating to this simple little country maiden, and he exerted himself to the utmost to please his pretty, artless companion.

It was the first break in the lonely monotony of Vivien North's dreary young life—the first dawning of that sun that was to shine so brightly for a time.

Valentine told her of the great world beyond, the dazzling wonders of city life, and the gay balls and parties young girls of her age were permitted to attend—a veritable fairy life where sorrow never entered.

He laughed lightly to himself as he noted how deeply he interested her.

"We shall meet here very often," he silently assured himself; and again Bertram Valentine laughed softly, and that laugh was not pleasant to hear.

The novelty of the situation pleased Valentine. The chance meeting in this lovely bower with such a sweet little country lassie had a piquant dash of romance about it that charmed him, and he gave himself up to the anticipation of a delightful flirtation, recklessly heedless of how it was to end.

Yet pretty little Vivien North pleased handsome Bertram Valentine, and there is a world of truth in the old adage of love at first sight, and how quickly young hearts respond to its sweet whisper.

And the hour that they spent there together, listening to the song of the birds and the low, musical dip of the waves, was the brightest chapter of their lives. It was the prettiest dawning of love's sweet dream that ever could have been pictured to artless little Vivien.

The dip of the oars in the water recalled Valentine to his senses, and glancing up he saw his friend Cuthbert Leigh hurriedly rowing toward the spot where they sat.

"I will not detain you any longer, Vivien," said Valentine, hurriedly; "but I have found these moments so pleasant I shall come here every day at this hour, and if a day should pass that I cannot see you I will mark that day down as one that has had no sunshine in it. Promise me you will come, little Vivien," he cried, flushing eagerly as he clasped her unresisting little white hands in a strong, firm grip.

Poor bewildered little Vivien North, you must not judge her harshly, dear reader; rather pity her; for a young girl's heart is not always proof against the eager entreaties of a fascinating young man.

Vivien forgot the warning in her dream-book, forgot everything but the pleasure of meeting him again, and the promise was shyly but readily given.

Valentine watched the slender, girlish little figure flit away through the crimson blossoms and the sunshine to the old farm-house beyond, telling himself remorsefully over and over again that he was a villain to cross the path of that lonely child who admired him so, into whose life

he had suddenly come like a brilliant bewildering meteor.

"It is such a pretty love story," he sighed; "it seems a thousand pities that a stop must be put to it. It would have been better if I had taken Leigh's advice and gone over in the skiff with him, and left this paradise before I looked upon pretty Vivien North's face," he ruminated. "But I have quite made up my mind to one course: it will not do to see Vivien again. I will stay away and she will soon forget me."

Somehow the thought that she would forget him brought a keen pang of regret to the heart of fickle Bertram Valentine.

At that moment Leigh's skiff touched the shore.

"Never mind handing out the guns; you may as well leave them in the boat. I've changed my mind about hunting here," said Valentine, flushing uneasily under his friend's stare of surprise.

"W-h-e-w! how does it happen you have changed your mind so suddenly?" cried Leigh, with a long, low whistle. "Have the fairies driven you away from their enchanted ground, or did the voice belong to some withered, wrinkled old maid? You look upset over something—which is it, eh, old boy?"

"Your jest is in bad taste, Leigh," retorted Bertram, savagely, as he jumped into the skiff—"never refer to such nonsense again."

"But did you really discover the owner of the voice?" persisted Cuthbert. "I'll bet a silk hat something unusual must have happened to put jolly Bertram Valentine into a humour like this."

"Yes, something has happened. I've encountered the fairy," replied Valentine, abruptly, avoiding his friend's prolonged stare.

"Was she pretty or deucedly ugly?" queried Leigh, curiously.

"So pretty that I wish to Heaven we had never met," Valentine burst out with intense emotion. "I will tell you candidly, Leigh, I do not see how I am to live without her."

"And does love strike a fellow in that lightning-like manner?" cried Leigh, aghast. "But surely, Valentine, you are jesting—you dare not lend yourself to—"

"To what?" demanded Valentine, bitterly, his eyes flashing fire.

"To an entanglement of any sort," replied Cuthbert Leigh, slowly, turning white to the very lips.

"There is no telling what I dare and what I dare not do," retorted Valentine, coolly, raising his dark glittering eyes, in which a strange light gleamed, to his friend's face.

Alas! for the resolutions of a fickle man. If Vivien had had anyone to whom she could confide her pretty romantic love-story, the secret meetings that followed—which Valentine contrived to manage in one way or another—would never have taken place, and this true tale of a young girl's folly would never have been written as a warning to other young and lovely maidens.

Bertram Valentine was growing more reckless day by day. He put from his thoughts for the time being all memory of the haughty young heiress upon whose white taper finger his engagement-ring glittered, and who was shortly to become his bride.

"Between two loves! Was ever a fellow in such a fix!" he muttered, savagely, tossing his affianced's latest letter into the lake.

Valentine's flirtation had turned out most disastrously to him. He loved Vivien North.

"She shall be mine in spite of all the world!" he cried out, hoarsely.

All day long Vivien would go about the old farm-house as happy as a bird. There were no longer fits of petulant weeping because she could not accompany her cousin Clara to town.

"It was best then that Clara should go instead of me," she would say, with a gay bright laugh, the prettiest flush imaginable stealing into her dimpled cheeks.

And the words puzzled Farmer Nelson and his suspicious wife, and they wondered what on earth she could mean. And they marvelled much at the great change that had come over Vivien of late.

"There's something amiss, Tom," remarked the farmer's wife. "I saw a flock of ravens flying in a straight line toward the west this morning, and that's a sure sign something dreadful is going to happen, and somehow I can't shake off the belief what it's about."

"Nonsense," remarked Tom Nelson, bluffly; "you women are all notions and signs. Vivien's all right. Don't scold the child so much—"

"I shall keep a sharp look-out," declared his wife, angrily; "for ravens are ravens, and signs are signs. I don't trust Vivien since the morning I sent her to put up the barn, and just for pure spite she never touched 'em, and the cows got into the field and trampled down the corn. She acts mighty mysterious and strange of late."

"Where's Vivien now?" exclaimed Tom Nelson, abruptly. "Send her to me; I want her."

"You'll have to find her first," answered his wife, crossly, tossing her head disdainfully. "She's gone half of the livelong day roaming the fields, and at evenings she's never to be seen."

"What is the matter?" thought Tom Nelson, as he slowly quitted the house. "Is home so distasteful to the child as that? Little Vivien unhappy here! I must look into it. I'm afraid I have been neglecting the child."

He passed a handsome young man in the path as he walked slowly along, whose eyes fell beneath the careless glance of the farmer as he nodded and passed quickly on.

"What will she say when I tell her that I have come to say good-bye?" he muttered. "Will she care enough for me to cling to my doubtful fortunes? If Vivien were only rich," he sighed, "how different life might be for both of us!"

Valentine walked quickly along, savagely whipping off the heads of the daisies in the path with his walking-stick.

A slight little figure stood dimly outlined against the dark background of the glen awaiting him.

"Vivien, my darling!" he called, eagerly extending his arms to her.

"Oh, Bertram—Bertram!" cried Vivien, springing into his embrace, "you stayed so long, I—I—was afraid you would not come!"

"What would you have done if I had not come, Vivien?"

"I think I would have died if you had not come," she answered, artlessly.

"Do you love me so much that you would leave all on earth to be with me through life?" he asked, eagerly, his dark eyes strangely, unnaturally brilliant, and hot flushes coming and going quickly over his pale, determined face as he strained her to his heart. "Think quickly, Vivien."

"Do you mean—will I marry you, Bertram?" she asked, with all the sweet, trusting simplicity of a child. "Is that what you mean?"

"Yes, my love," he answered, constrainedly. "My friend Leigh over at the hotel is a minister. I think I can get him to perform the ceremony for me."

He uttered the lie unblushingly; and many a girl more worldly wise than poor simple little Vivien would have done as she did—blindly believed him.

CHAPTER III.

ONE hour later, out on the green lawn fronting the hotel, Valentine and his college chum Cuthbert Leigh paced to and fro, with linked arms, in deep, earnest conversation.

"You must do this for me, Cuthbert, old boy," cried Bertram, vehemently. "We have stood by each other in too many startling adventures to refuse to stand by each other now."

"Never in a case like this," interrupted Leigh, huskily. "By heavens! old fellow, my conscience wouldn't let me do this thing. Get somebody else—"

"Conscience!" sneered Valentine, angrily; "Your conscience didn't seem to trouble you much in regard to that affair last summer at Newport."

"Don't bring up that affair. I have been trying to forget it, to lay its ghost," groaned Leigh.

"You are in my power, Leigh," cried Valentine, coolly, "and I will call it square from this time out if you will help me out with this little affair I have on hand to-night. If you refuse, you and I are enemies from this time. I am desperately in earnest, old fellow; you will be wise to make terms with me."

"I am in your power, as you say," assented Leigh, desperately. "I haven't lived a blameless life, and my sins are many; but I am proud to say my sins have never been against women; no one can ever accuse me of that."

"I am tired of this morabzing," cried Valentine, impatiently. "No one will be the wiser," he continued, eagerly. "It won't hurt you to mumble over a few words for me, will it?"

For a moment Leigh thought deeply and earnestly.

"I'll tell you what I will do, Bertram," he said, turning and laying his hand lightly on his friend's shoulder. "I don't exactly like to do this myself; but I'll get a young friend of mine to settle the affair for you."

"A friend of yours," said Valentine, elevating his dark eyebrows. "How does it happen I have not heard you mention him before? I did not know you had any friends hereabouts."

"How do you suppose I put in the long, tedious hours this month past, when you went to the glen? I picked up this fellow for someone to talk to in order to save me from dying of ennui," replied Leigh, carelessly; "and it's lucky I did. He will answer your purpose admirably."

"Perhaps Vivien may know him, or he may refuse, and I don't relish getting myself into the power of these conscientious country fools."

"I think I can persuade him to fall in with your plan," replied Leigh, in an agitated voice. "And as for his knowing the girl, or her knowing him, it is impossible; he is quite a stranger here."

"Well, we won't stand on ceremony any longer," retorted Valentine, impatiently. "First broach the subject to the fellow in a roundabout way, and if you see he takes kindly to the idea then bring him here to me. Don't lose time arguing the matter with him, if you see he's stubborn," called out Bertram, hastily, as Leigh moved quickly off on his strange errand.

When well out of sight Leigh turned and retraced his steps by a circuitous route. Gaining his shift and pushing off unobserved into the lake, he made directly for the group of willows where Valentine had said little Vivien awaited him.

"First of all I must see if this foolish, romantic little girl really does love him," he muttered. "If she can be persuaded and advised, well and good; but if she won't be saved from her own rashness the price of her folly must rest on her own head. She will float on blindly down the same stream where thousands of pretty girls have floated before her. For the sake of my own sister at home I will try and save this one, as I would wish some good-hearted fellow to try to save mine if she were in like peril."

He hastily threw a large dark shawl about him, which had been made to do the duty of a kind of cushion on the seat, and drawing his broad slouch hat quite over his face, he stepped out of the boat, secured it, and with stealthy steps stole silently toward the glen.

A slender little figure sat on a mossy log in the soft, shadowy moonlight. She did not observe Leigh's approach until he touched her on the shoulder.

"Will you have your fortune told, pretty maid?" he asked, in a winning, strangely altered voice.

Vivien started up with a little scream, eyeing the intruder with something like terror in her pretty blue wide-opened eyes.

As the clear moonlight fell full upon Vivien's face Cuthbert Leigh came near crying out in bewildered surprise, forgetting the rôle he had so ingeniously marked out for himself.

As he gazed upon the rare beauty of the dimpled, innocent face before him, with its rich

setting of golden curls, sky-blue eyes, and ripe red lips, he readily understood his friend's mad infatuation.

A face so innocent and bewitching any young man with a heart in his bosom and young blood in his veins could scarcely have gazed upon unmoved, and he vowed then and there to befriend her if it lay in his power.

He repeated the question; then Vivien broke out into a joyous rippling laugh.

"I shall have the grandest fortune in all the world within an hour from now," she said, gaily; "and I wouldn't exchange places with a queen. Go on, my good man, leave me to my pleasant thoughts."

"Let me warn you, maiden," he returned, huskily. "Be warned before it is too late. Do you love so dearly this man for whom you wait?"

"If you were a true fortune-teller you would know that," she said, with a merry, saucy laugh. "You would know that I love him better than all the world beside."

"Your beauty will be your curse!" said the man, sadly.

Vivien started up in a fright, the light laugh dying away on her crimson lips. Those were the very words she had read in her dream-book. Why had this stranger uttered the same warning to her?

"Let me warn you before it is too late," he cried, earnestly, forgetting in his eloquent excitement the tone of voice he had previously assumed. "Fly from this false-hearted lover of yours; he is a villain; he would drag you down to worse than death; he does not love you; I swear it; you will—"

"Stop—stop!" cried Vivien, piteously. "Do not shatter my beautiful love-dream; he is all I have to love in the wide, wide world. I would die if I were to lose him. My love is past recalling. Good fortune-teller, go away and leave me to my fate."

"Can nothing alter your heart?" he cried; "can nothing save you from yourself?"

"I don't want to be saved, as you call it. I want only my love in all this world; and within an hour I shall be his wife. What fate could be happier?" she cried, blushing rosy red with maidenly confusion.

"As you will, maiden," cried the man, huskily. "Remember all your after life that you rushed on blindly to your fate, only to be wrecked at last, as many before you have been, on the rock of love."

As he spoke he turned swiftly among the shadows, leaving her to herself, a strange project revolving in his fertile brain.

"How strange it is that pretty, trusting young girls like this one should cross the paths of fellows like Valentine," he mused. "Poor child—poor child!"

Strangely enough, Leigh kept his promise to Bertram to the letter. Suffice it to say that half an hour later he brought with him a wiry, nervous, keen-eyed stranger, whom he introduced to Valentine as Mr. Paxton.

A peculiar smile hovered around Valentine's lips as he acknowledged the introduction. Valentine flushed uneasily, and Mr. Paxton nodded a little stiffly, and the trio entered the boat.

"I may be one too many," said Leigh, holding back.

"Don't leave us, old boy," whispered Valentine. "This friend of yours seems as nervous as a bread-and-butter school girl over this affair. He doesn't seem capable of enjoying a lark. Get into the boat and stick close by him, or he may back out; and if he does, you have got to perform the ceremony for me!"

On the whole, Leigh concluded to stick close to his friend—to see that there was no backing out—for he had determined that he would not have a sin like this on his soul for fifty Bertram Valentines. The new friend must attend to this little affair for Valentine. Leigh had a particular reason for wishing it so.

Leigh was treading upon nettles all through the trip, lest Valentine might let some word drop, or do something to counteract the arguments he had used to induce Mr. Paxton to take part in the affair at all.

Yet in his way, although he was a little sedate

Mr. Paxton enjoyed a romantic little affair as well as any one.

"This fellow looks so solemn over this affair he actually gives me the shivers. Is he always like this?" inquired Valentine in a whisper to Leigh, as the host touched the land.

"He wants to give your little romance an air of reality," replied Leigh, with a forced laugh. "Don't you suppose that sweetheart of yours would be a trifle suspicious if he should caper around like a clown? You must look at the features of things."

"True," replied Bertram, recovering instantly his high, exuberant spirits; "forgive me, Leigh; of course I forgot that. I want to prepare you for a surprise, though. My pretty little Vivien is as sweet as a fairy, and as lovely a picture as man's eyes ever rested on; when you once see her you will not wonder that I do not give her up."

"I hope your admiration will last," remarked Leigh, dryly.

"There is not the least doubt of that," replied Bertram, enthusiastically; "and if I can get out of that other affair, and the governor can be won over, who knows but that I may marry little Vivien in earnest some day?"

"Who knows?" repeated Leigh, musingly. "But you're in a very tight boat now, Bertram, old chum. Look out for yourself; it is pretty risky to take such chances. But I hope it will all come out right."

Valentine's reply was quickly cut short by a pretty little blue-eyed creature springing down the moonlit path. Two lovely white arms crept shyly around his neck, and Vivien, all unconscious of the conspiracy against her, was folded in his passionate clasp. By way of introduction he said:

"This is Mr. Leigh, my college chum, and this is Mr. Paxton, the minister who is to make us one."

CHAPTER IV.

THE wedding, or farce, or whatever Valentine chose to call it, was over. Leigh and Mr. Paxton had returned to the hotel, and Vivien and Bertram stood alone together out in the bright moonlight.

There was no need of saying good-bye now. Vivien should go with him to London en route for Paris in the train, which left within an hour.

"Are you sure, Bertram, that it is all right?" questioned Vivien, wistfully, when he told her of the brilliant plan he had arranged for their future. "I ought at least to tell Uncle Tom and Aunt Julia, and say good-bye to them—they may think I ran away; I have always threatened to do it."

"So much the better," laughed Bertram. "Let them think what they please; you are not dependent upon them any more; you belong to me now."

Two caressing little white hands crept timidly into his own, and Vivien's childish blue eyes, with a trustfulness that made him fairly wine, glanced coyly up at him.

She had belonged to "nobody" all her life, and now it was sweet and comforting to hear this handsome, dark-eyed young husband claim her.

There was something charmingly romantic, too, about stealing away from the lonesome old farm with him; and when she reached the grand city—to which he was going to take her—she would write back and tell them all about it, and sign her name Mrs. Bertram Valentine. She pictured to herself how surprised they all would be, and particularly Clara. She could fancy her striding up and down the best room, fairly screaming with rage, crying out that fate had played a mean trick upon her, sending her off to the city, and leaving her despised cousin to win the handsome, wealthy young stranger. Yes, it would be jolly fun to keep it a secret until she could write them of the beautiful home that was all her own, the horses and carriages that were hers, and the grand silks and the real point lace.

Child-like, her foolish little head was quite

turned with these bewildering visions; and Bertram found it easier than he had anticipated to induce her to steal away quietly and unobserved from the farmhouse with him.

Ere the daylight broke cold and grey over the old farmhouse Vivien and Bertram were rapidly nearing London.

"We must keep our marriage a secret for the present, darling," he was explaining, "because I'm not through college yet; and if the governor should once get an inkling of this affair he would raise a regular hurricane."

"And must you leave me and go back to college?" asked the little child-bride, in open-eyed wonder. "Why, I never heard of anybody's husband going to school before," she sobbed, piteously. "Don't go back, Bertram; or if you do, please take me with you."

The startling innocence of the artless proposition amused Bertram vastly.

"It isn't a school for husbands and wives," he cried, laughing uproariously. "Oxton is a college for just such reckless young fellows as I am, who have no business to marry."

The peculiar laugh that accompanied his words, and the careless way he tossed his handsome head back, struck a cold chill to Vivien's heart.

"But they have business to marry if they see some one they love, haven't they, Bertram?" she questioned, timidly.

"They see too many whom they love, or think they do, at least," he answered, carelessly.

His handsome face flushed uneasily under her childish gaze, and a strange glitter crept into his bright black eyes that puzzled her; yet she was far too young and careless in the ways of the world to pay much heed to it.

(To be continued.)

THE EVENING OF HIS LIFE.

—101—

(Continued from page 282.)

"How very nice—quite poetical!" biting his lip fiercely. "However, I will content myself with the last one before supper, then."

"With pleasure," holding her card out again indifferently.

On they go in the mazy, intoxicating waltz, Kate's feet keeping measure to the music, her eyes gleaming like stars, her golden head near Frank's shoulder, almost leaning there, for she is in a blissful dream, evoked by the fairy scene—music, lights, and the superb dancing of her partner.

Her husband's eyes are upon her, but she is unconscious of everything. She is in a kind of fairy maelstrom, where memory has ceased, and only her feet seem conscious.

"Heavens, I shall go mad!" says Colonel Pousonby, under his breath. "He holds some wonderful power or spell over her. How dare she rest her head on him! Is he lost to all shame?" a cold perspiration bursting over his frame. "But, no! It is treason to my darling wife. She is only thoughtless. I am a lunatic."

Utterly fatigued, Kate allowed Fitzgerald to lead her to a nook where huge palms and ferns were placed as a screen from the dancers.

She sinks down on a seat perfectly weary, and tries her best by dint of her fan to cool her heated frame; while Frank, with fever-passion laden eyes, drinks in her glorious beauty, now developed into perfect womanhood.

It hurls him on to frenzy to think she loved him, and yet has given herself to another man "old enough," he says between his clenched teeth, "to be her father. Could anything be more revolting! Curse him! I hate him! Thank Heaven, it is not too late to snatch my beautiful love from his arms. She has sold herself."

"Dear, oh, dear, how stifling it is here!" gasps Kate. "I must go," she faintly. "I fear I am not quite well."

"You shall not leave me, Kate," he says, passionately. "I have not been able to speak with you alone till now. Why do you avoid me? Is it remorse for driving me away?"

"Let me go!" she gasps, with terrified eyes.

"Not till you have heard me. See, Kate, my lost darling, I have prayed—yes, lived only for this night, to hold you in my arms once again, and I thank Heaven I have been rewarded. Does not my heart speak to yours? Do you think I believe for one moment you transferred your love to him? No, that comforts me through all. He never gained that. You are mine, and tomorrow we will cast this hateful bondage off for ever and for—"

"The next dance is about to commence, sir," says a stern, hard voice, "and Mrs. Pousonby has fainted," as the Colonel, perfectly colourless, his eyes burning like coals of fire, points to the ball-room, peremptorily, almost menacingly.

Left alone with his wife, he stands contemplating her, as she lies pale and senseless, with an expression of such bitter pain that scalding tears forced themselves to be dashed away in wrath.

"False, treacherous Kate, you told me a lie—a base lie. Your heart was his, yet you blackened your soul by vowing it was mine. Heaven help you! I have loved you so madly, too," pressing a yearning kiss on the still brow as people do to a dear one before the coffin lid is fixed, "the last one I shall ever press on your false face," smoothing the soft rings of chestnut hair caressingly, and gazing with intense, passionate grief, as if he were taking his farewell, and wished to fix her face on his memory.

It was a man aged by ten years who passed out of the alcove to summon the housekeeper to attend his mistress; the elasticity had fled from his footsteps, his eyes were hard, dim, and stony, his heart deadened.

"Where is my husband?" asks Kate, bewildered, as the water and other restoratives bring her back to some sense of reality. "Let me see," trying to remember the incidents that had occurred, and dashing from her brow the heavy coils of hair. "I came on faint all at once while dancing, and then Frank brought me here; and oh, merciful Heaven, it comes all before me now, I saw Sefton standing before us. He had heard the insane words of Frank, and before I could cry out I fainted. Take me away from here—let me die," tottering out, her hand tightly held by Mrs. Barlow, whose heart bled for her sweet mistress, whom she dearly loved.

"Don't be so down, dear," she says, soothingly. "All will come right when you explain to the Colonel."

"I tell you that there is nothing left but death. Oh, that it would come now!" flinging herself down on her bed, just as she was, a glistening heap of satin and lace.

"How I wish those people would go," mutters the housekeeper, viciously. "I will bring Miss Margery to her; she may comfort her."

"Oh, my darling, what is the matter? I speak to me," implored Margery, with tearful eyes. "Where is Sefton? Does he know you are ill? Let me send for him?"

"Stay, what would you do?" she cries. "I command you not to do so. Do you hear?"

"Yes. But why?"

"Because he and I are parted. Yes, I tell you as surely as if the grave had closed over me."

"Heaven help and pity you both," moaned poor Margery.

The dancers are gone, an excuse was made that Mrs. Pousonby was taken suddenly ill, and husband and wife are alone.

"I have come to bid you good-bye, Mrs. Pousonby," he says, in a cold, grating voice. "Before the sun rises, I shall be away from Melrose. My only regret is that I ever stepped my feet in it to make you so unhappy, as you undoubtedly must have been, at being compelled to share your bed and board with a man whom in your heart you disliked. I have not come to reproach, but to tell you that my presence shall not trouble you further. The wrong was mine, it is for me to repair it. This place will always be yours and Margery's. All business matters will be, for the future, in the hands of my solicitors. Good-bye, again, Heaven forgive you."

She stands, listening, dazed, turned almost into stone; then, seeing him turn to leave the

room, she stretches out her poor hands, and cries,—

"Sefton, my husband, come back, I am not guilty. Oh, come back!" and falls prone to the ground, and hides her miserable face in her outstretched arms.

Seven long, weary years have passed over the head of Mrs. Ponsonby. She is reading a story book to a handsome boy with golden ringlets clustering around his head like a young Adonis. His large eyes are opened wide in wonderment and interest, as his mother proceeds with the story.

"Oh, dear auntie Margy," he exclaims, delightedly; "couldn't I go and kill nasty, big giants for oo and mamma? I want to be a soldier with a drum, and a sword, and a fiddle cannon that shoots bang. Me know where they are—I show you."

"The darling," says Margery, affectionately. "Come and give me a kiss."

"Mamma first, you know," climbing on to Mrs. Ponsonby's lap, and laying his bonny head on her breast.

"I shall be jealous, sweetheart," laughs Margery. "Why is mamma to get the first kiss, eh, little rogue?"

"Toss she reads the pretty stories."

"Then if I read you some, you will kiss me first?"

"I tant pomise," he says, patronisingly, as he jumps down and perches up, and kisses with his innocent lips his aunt, whose hair is silvering now, and whose gentle face is sadly pensive, as if she had passed through some great trial.

Kate, the once beautiful belle of the county, is not so much changed, though there is a settled expression of pain in the pale face, that had lost all its bloom. There is the same bronze-gold hair, and large, lustrous, blue eyes, undimmed, though grief has set a pensive look in them, that moves the beholder with silent sympathy and pity.

She never smiles except her darling boy provokes one by his little, lively sallies and quaint ways.

Young Sefton is the pet of his worse than widowed mother, and his aunt dotes on the noble little man; as to the servants, no aristocrat in the world could rule them more than he does—quite innocently, too—by his pretty, prattling, affectionate ways.

"Still the same old look. I could fancy that the past was a dream, and Kate had gone in to attend to her domestic affairs, while I was sauntering about finishing my cigar. Seven long years, and our lives are severed, while these inanimate things are looking the same as ever," soliloquises Colonel Ponsonby, who, tired of travel, has had an intense longing to see the dear old place and home of his poor wife once again, and to see Margery, whom he cherished a brother's affection for.

Was there a latent feeling lying deep down in his heart to see that loved face again; to hold her hand in his and breathe a whisper of sweet forgiveness? Who knows! At all events he never permitted her name to pass his lips.

"Some child staying here, I suppose," he says, going up and looking at the little fellow, who is in the height of his glory as he stands, red in hand, trying his skill as a fisherman.

"So my little man," he says, pleasantly, "you seem to be enjoying yourself. But why are you left to take care of yourself by this big pond?"

"Do you tink I am afraid?" he says, boldly. "I can take care of myself anywhere, I can tell you. I'm going to be a soldier, and they is never afraid; is you?" looking at the Colonel rather contemptuously.

"Is depends," he laughs, feeling amused at the handsome child's quaintness. "What is your name, young gentleman?"

"Sefton Ponsonby," replies the boy, proudly. "And that house there is my home, such a pretty one; and my mamma and auntie is there. I'm their little knight; nobody dare touch them, for I've got a big sword, and I would kill them."

"Oh, Heaven!" he gasped, as he caught the

boy up in his arms and pressed the golden head to his breast. "Is there forgiveness for such a wretch as I!—my beautiful boy, my Kate's precious gift."

Young Sefton felt the hot tears on his rosy face, and some strange impulse that stirred within him made him throw his arms around his unknown father's neck, and say, soothingly,—

"Don't cry, man. I will love you if you is good. Has somebody been unkind to you? I will fight them. Come to my dear mamma, she will cuddle you tight in her arms, like she do me. Come, man."

"My darling boy, my Heaven-sent treasure, look at me. See, I am your father," he says, hysterically.

His feelings were so intense that he or the child was not aware that Mrs. Ponsonby stood before them.

In a moment young Sefton struggles out of his arms, exclaiming,—

"See, man, here is my booful mamma."

He turns to meet the white, terror-stricken face of Kate, who totters as if about to fall.

In another moment he folds her in his longing arms and presses hot, burning, hungering kisses on her lips, brow, and eyes, saying,—

"My Kate, my own darling of old, my only treasure. See, I am here begging for forgiveness for the sake of our child."

"Oh, Sefton, this joy has almost killed me," she murmurs, as she clings to him as if afraid he would vanish like a morning dream. "You are forgiven seventy times seven; come, let us see Margery."

The invalid was being wheeled to the spot where those she loved so well, and had prayed for their reconciliation, stood, the old love-light in their eyes, and beaming in their happy faces—little Sefton at her side.

No words passed between the wanderer and her, for it seemed that an angel had flown down from Heaven's gates, and turned an earthly home into a paradise of bliss.

There was no place in the hearts of any of the group save for happiness, and catching up his noble boy, Ponsonby whispers to his wife,—

"Kate, this is our shield and everlasting trust. Our boy will add lustre to love's golden sunset."

[THE END.]

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FACETIE.

FRIEND: "Can't you be a man, even if Miss Moneybags has refused you? What's the use of grieving so on a girl's account?" The Rejected: "You're off the track, my boy; it's for her account, not on it, that I'm grieving."

"Why, Tommy, you are not at the jam again, and only whipped for it an hour ago?" "Yes, mamma; I heard you tell auntie you thought you'd whipped me too hard, and I thought I'd make it even."

"I SHALL apply for a divorce. He is treating me like a dog, and he makes me work like a horse." "Well, then, you should make your complaint to the Society for the Protection of Animals, and not to the courts."

"I WISH we were rich, John, and could do something for the world." Mrs. B. remarked, half-devotely, half-impatiently. "But, my dear, we can do good in a quiet way now." "Yes; but no one will ever hear of it."

MODERN MAID: "I want some advice." Old Lady: "Certainly my dear. What is it?" Modern Maid: "Shall I marry a man whose tastes are the opposite of mine, and quarrel with him? or shall I marry a man whose tastes are the same as mine, and get tired of him?"

AT A soirée musicale a lady who is in the habit of singing off the key addressed Massenet the composer. "Dear maestro, I have been requested to sing the grand aria from the 'Cid.' You have no idea how frightened I am." "Not so much as I am," replied the composer, with a sickly smile.

IN THE CHEMICAL LABORATORY.—Professor: "What has become of Tom Appleton? Wasn't he studying with the class last year?" "Ah, yes; Appleton—poor fellow! A fine student, but absent-minded in the use of chemicals—very. That discoloration on the ceiling—notice it?" "Yes." "That's Appleton."

"GOT all sorts of ties here!" said a would-be wit, entering a well-known haberdasher's shop. "Yes, sir," replied the shopman. "Well, I should like a pig-stye," remarked the customer. "All right, sir. Just bend down your hog's head and we will take your measure," said the ready shopman.

MR. HAYSEED: "I'm glad we sent Miss Flip-top that handsome carter, even if it did cost the price of a ham. We're to have the finest kind of seats at the church, Mariah—reserved, too." Mrs. Hayseed: "Who told you?" "Here it is on the card; 'R. S. V. P.' That must mean reserved seats for valuable presents."

"YOU women," complained young Mr. Sypher, "always laugh at the least little thing." "You wrong us," earnestly returned the beautiful Miss Koolson; "when, Mr. Sypher, did I laugh at you?" And all the time they were removing the soup plates young Mr. Sypher looked into his napkin and thought as well as he could.

SALESMAN (in jewellery shop, to Tom Stonebroke, who has just been selecting a jewel): "And now, sir, how about the setting for the lady's ring?" Tom Stonebroke (embarrassed): "Eh! Why, good Heavens—er—you don't mean—?" (A moment later) "Excuse me, Edith, but I actually thought the fellow said 'setting'!"

DUNKEL (to lawyer who is making out his will): "I want to leave each clerk ten thousand pound dot haf pen in my employ twenty years." Lawyer: "Why, that's too liberal, Mr. Dunkel." Dunkel: "Ah, dot's it! None of them haf pen mit me ofer von year, but it makes a good free advertisement for my poys ven I'm dead, ain't it?"

A CHEMIST at a salubrious south coast watering-place, who is somewhat short of stature, had an amusing experience recently. His shop-lad had taken upon himself to attend to a small boy who had come in, and the proprietor, seeing the boy, asked,—"What can I do for you, sonny?" "Nothing, thank you," was the reply. "The other little boy is wrapping me up a box of pills."

FARMER: "That was a good number of the 'Budthorpe Gazette' you got out last week." Country Editor: "I am glad to hear that you were pleased with it." Farmer: "Them stories you had in about them folks bein' cured of long-standin' diseases were the entertainin'est bits of news I've read for a long while."

WARDEN (of penitentiary): This new convict, number 41,144, gave me some impudence when we received him in the office a few minutes ago. Make haste and photograph him, and then send him to the dark cell for ten days. Give him nothing but bread-and-water during that time." Prison Photographer (briskly): "All right sir. (To convict). Look pleasant, please."

THE following notice, which is posted outside the mill of a successful, but not literary, Lancashire cotton spinner, seems to be rather mixed: "Five shillings reward will be given to any person or persons found breaking windows or otherwise damaging these premises." Several enterprising neighbours have tried to earn the five shillings, but have got "seven days" instead. So much for the perversity of human nature.

KING OSCAR of Sweden once passed through a little town, which was festively decorated for the occasion. Among the rest, a huge transparency, affixed to a gloomy-looking edifice, attracted his attention. It bore the inscription "Welcome to Your Majesty!" in gigantic letters. "What building is that?" the King inquired. "That is the county prison, your Majesty," replied one of the aldermen. The King laughed and was heard to observe, "Isn't that carrying hospitality a little too far?"

A RATHER nearsighted lady called to be prescribed for, and on being shown into the consulting-room and seeing a man standing there, proceeded at once to tell him her complaints. The man listened gravely while she dilated at great length upon her various ailments, holding out her tongue for his inspection, and inviting him to feel her pulse. At last, when she had finished, he remarked: "Madam, yours seems to be a very serious case; if I were you I should see the doctor, I'm only the plumber."

A PRISONER was in the dock on a serious charge of stealing, and, the case having been presented to the court by the prosecuting solicitor, he was ordered to stand up. "Have you a lawyer?" asked the court. "No, sir." "Are you able to employ one?" "No, sir." "Do you want a lawyer to defend the case?" "Not particular, sir." "Well, what do you propose to do about the case?" "We'll—er—with a yawn, as if wearied of the thing, "I'm willin' to drop the case, far's I'm concerned."

A VESSEL being ready for sailing, the captain ordered a new hand to take a boat to shore and buy ten shillings' worth of vegetables. Not being certain of the meaning of the word, the man appealed to the first individual he met. "I say, mate, what might vegetables be?" "Vegetables?" the stranger replied; "why, peas are vegetables, for instance." "That 'll do," said Jack. After he had got his sack filled with peas, he pulled back to the ship, and when alongside, the captain called out,—"Have you got those vegetables?" "Yes, sir." "All right," said the captain. "Hand them up one by one." "By gad," said Jack, scratching his head, "I have got a job now, and no mistake."

A WELL KNOWN Q.C.'s wife, who is an accomplished musician, gave a dinner-party recently. Among the guests was a certain member of the corporation of a famous Western city. While awaiting announcement at dinner, at the urgent request of some of the guests, the hostess played and sang. She had just finished a polonaise by Chopin, which was greeted with a burst of applause, and as she rose from the piano, in the silence which followed the sweet strains, her husband turned to the gentleman from the West with: "Would you like a sonata before dinner, Mr.—?" "Well, I don't mind," replied the guest, displaying instantly more interest in the proceedings than he had hitherto evinced. "I had two on my way here, but I think I can stand another."

AMONG the advertisements in a German paper there lately appeared the following: "The gentleman who found a purse with money in the Blumenstrasse is requested to forward it to the address of the loser, as he was recognised." A few days afterwards the reply was inserted: "The recognised gentleman who picked up a purse in the Blumenstrasse requests the loser to call at his house."

THE season had been an exceptionally bad one for farmers, but in a country church, not a hundred miles from Arbroath, the office-bearers had resolved, according to custom, to hold the annual harvest thanksgiving service. It was noticed that on that particular Sunday Mr. Johnstone, a regular attendant and a pillar of the church (whose crops had turned out very poorly), was not in attendance. The minister in the course of the following week met Mr. Johnstone and inquired of him the reason of his absence from church on such an important occasion. "Weel, sir," replied Mr. Johnstone, "I didna care about approaching my Maker in a spirit of sarcasm."

A WITLY gentleman some years ago offered a £5 prize to anybody who correctly counted the "N's" in Exodus. A young man who determined to win the prize impressed to his assistance the whole family of brothers and sisters, and for the next two or three nights of the week the table of the home was covered with Bibles and little slips of paper. A busy circle sat round, counting and checking, finding a mistake here, and going over a whole chapter again. Excitement ran high as the task was finished, and it hardly seemed as if by any reasonable possibility they could be out of the race. The calculation was duly posted, and in a few days a letter came back saying there was no "N" in Exodus. And if you carefully examine the word, you will find it is made up of E-X-O-D-U-S.

RIPE FRUIT.

THE world generally git things about level; they hav allowed a fu deserving ones to go unrewarded, but I never knu them to let a ded beat git the start ov them, for enny grate length ov time.

Det is a kind ov slo pixon.

One hit to five misses is about the fair average ov life; and the world keeps its stern rekord ov the misses, and leaves the hits to blo their own horn.

Truth is a simple thing, but it rules the universe, and fashions the destiny ov man.

Luv will substat on koonse phood, but friendship must hav daintys.

One ov the happiest things kind Heaven ever has done for the krow, is to make each krow certain that her little krow is the blackest.

A miser is allwuss extolling his own liberality, and complaining ov the avarice ov his nabors.

The grate power of wealth is, it enables a man to be generous; its gratest blessing is, when it prompts him to be so.

The science and philosophy ov all things is nothing more than the common sense that is in it.

Mi dear phellow, if yu expekt to sit on the top round ov the ladder, yu have got to klime; not one in four milliyuns has ever got there on wings.

The best way is to take things as we find them. Yu kan't argy the krooks out ov a dog's tale; you may kut it oph, and then, don't ye see! yu hain't got enny tale.

If yu would edukate the world, yu must learn the art ov teaching them without showing yure hand.

When we are yung we are all phull ov hurrah and no experience, and when we git old we have a little experience and no hurrah at all.

"The world never waz so korrupt as it iz now." This has been the opinyon ov the best brokers we hav had enny time for the last four thousand years.

Men seildum grow more virtuous as they gro-older. They suntimes tire out their vices.—
Josh Billings.

SOCIETY.

THE Duchess of Coburg will come to London in time for the Royal wedding, and her youngest daughter, Princess Beatrice, is to be one of Princess Maud's bridesmaids.

THE German Emperor has appointed his cousin, the Empress of Russia, to be Honorary Colonel of the 2nd Regiment of Prussian Dragoon Guards. This regiment is in future to be called "The Empress Alexandra of Russia's Own" regiment.

THE young Prince Alexander of Battenberg is often seen on a bicycle, which he has lately learned to ride. He is always attended, and generally by his tutor, who, perhaps, had to acquire the same art specially to perform this duty. Prince Alexander is a smart, bright-looking lad, quite natural and unaffected in manner.

It is said that the Queen of Holland has made her own choice of a husband, and the reported bridegroom elect is very nearly her own age, and is a youth who has been very carefully brought up. He is Prince Henry of Saxe-Meiningen, and consequently related to our Royal Family, the eldest daughter of the Empress Frederick being married to the Hereditary Prince of Saxe-Meiningen.

MR. H. HUGHES D'ARCY, of Winchester, has been appointed by the Queen tutor to the sons of Princess Henry of Battenberg, and has commenced his duties. Her Majesty's interest in these particular grandchildren has always been great, because they have lived with her and are the sons and daughter of her constant companion and beloved youngest child, and now that they are fatherless their Royal grandmother's tenderness and care for them knows no bounds.

THE Czar has no Civil List, but draws at discretion upon the Imperial Treasury, every rouble in which is supposed to be absolutely at his own disposal, so that his resources are practically inexhaustible. He is also the owner of immense estates in various parts of Russia. The *Sword*, or Russian code, describes the Czar as an autocrat whose power is without limit; while in the Russian catechism, drawn up for schools, it is stated that every one of his subjects owes him "adoration."

THE Queen is expected to come to London two days preceding Princess Maud's wedding, and to give a "gilt" dinner at Buckingham Palace to the Royal and Imperial visitors on the evening of her arrival. On the next day Her Majesty will probably be present at a garden party at Marlborough House, and on the following day will attend the wedding, so that Londoners will have several opportunities of seeing the Sovereign, who is sure to take her usual afternoon drives during her short stay in the capital.

THE Dowager Empress of Russia is to spend the next six weeks in Russia, after which she will go to Denmark on a visit to King Christian and Queen Louise, who are to entertain a large family party at Fredensborg Castle during August and September, including the Emperor and Empress of Russia, the King and Queen of the Hellenes, the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, and Prince and Princess Frederick Charles of Hesse. Fredensborg is the Royal chateau on the Ezerum So, which is famous for its beautiful gardens and its vast forests of beech and oak.

PRINCESS MAUD OF WALES is having enough dresses made to last her for years. The latest is a pretty summer costume of light grey texture. The coat-bodice has a circular-shaped basque cut out in one with the bodice parts; very full sleeves, made over a soft silk lining foundation. The skirt is fully gored, and arranged in four sections, without a centre back seam. There are double rows of stitching outline, roll collar, basque and wrist of sleeve. The coat includes eight sections—back, two side pieces, front and pointed revers in one, half-roll collar, material sleeve in one, upper and under-sleeve lining foundation. The lining is of fine satene, made up separately, and slip-stitched into the coat all seams being turned inside facing the bodice material.

STATISTICS.

FORESTS cover one-third of the land surface of the earth.

IN Ceylon there are dwarf oxen only 30 inches in height.

OF all the Sovereigns of the world the Shah of Persia is said to possess the largest treasure in jewels and gold ornaments, it being valued at £15,000,000. The chief object of value is the old crown of the Persian rulers, in the form of a pot of flowers, which is surmounted by an uncut ruby the size of a hen's egg.

THE copper mine entitled the Stora Kopparberget, in Sweden, is the oldest mine that has been continually worked up to the present day. It has been turning out copper for the last 800 years. As far back as the year 1229 it yielded large profits to its lucky owners. The actual yield has been recorded from the year 1693, when it amounted to 1,336 tons, down to the present century. The maximum was reached in 1650, when the output was 3,455 tons.

GEMS.

ALL have the gift of speech, but few are possessed of wisdom.

NO life is worthy and noble that has no "must" in it—that is not ready to bow its most cherished schemes or its fondest wishes to the ever-present authority of the still small voice.

AS we grow wise with age and concomitant sorrowful experience, we find that change, not stability, is the law of life, and that all things are for a time; while nothing, not the universe itself, is for ever.

WITH our limited minds and opportunities, all our knowledge must be to a certain extent fragmentary; but it is a good thing to have the fragments in some kind of order, to take stock of them, as it were, so as to know what is there and what is not, and thus be able to use them as required.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

HOW TO WASH OIL (FLOOR) CLOTH.—Do not slop a lot of water over it, as this causes the cloth to rot; wash with a soft flannel, Sun-light Soap and a little water. Wash off the soap, dry well, and polish with a little milk on a flannel. It will look like new.

SALMON SALAD.—Place on a bed of lettuce leaves in a flat salad bowl, the contents of one-half a can of salmon, freed from oil and bones and flaked. Pour over the fish a little boiled salmon dressing or mayonnaise, and garnish with slices of hard boiled egg and lemon.

STUFFED APPLES.—Wipe the apples with a wet towel, cut a thick slice from the stem end of each, scoop out the core without cutting through the apples, fill each one with an ounce of highly-seasoned sausage-meat, or with the slice from the top chopped and seasoned. Arrange on a large tin pan, dust over with cracker-dust and bake until tender. Serve with pork tenderloins.

ICED PINEAPPLE SNOW.—Boil six ounces of loaf sugar in a pint and a half of water, putting in a fresh or preserved pineapple. Boil until soft, squeeze in the juice of a lemon and pass through a sieve. Or one may cut half a pineapple into slices, pound with sugar, mix this with the boiling sugar and lemon juice and pass through the sieve. Freeze it to make pineapple ice, and when well set, beat up the whites of two eggs to a snow with cold crushed sugar mixed with the ice; fill your fancy glasses with this and serve with any delicate biscuit.

MISCELLANEOUS.

IN the Andes there is a wax tree, the product of which is very similar to beeswax.

THE oldest national flag in the world is that of Denmark. It has been in use since the year 1210.

CORAL islands are never more than ten or twelve feet above the surface of the ocean, their limit being assigned to them by the action of the waves.

THE earliest English medals were for naval exploits, the medal struck after the Armada representing the Ark resting on the flood; and the first medal for military services was one issued by Charles I. to his followers.

GOLD in transit across the Atlantic "sweats," however tightly it may be packed. It is usually sent in stout kegs and squeezed in as tightly as possible, but there is a regular allowance for loss by attrition upon the voyage, and in the course of years this loss to the commercial world amounts to a large sum.

THE largest cannon in the world was taken by the British when India was conquered. The cannon was cast about the year 1500, and was the work of a chief named Chuley Koomy Khan, of Ahmednuggur. The inside of the gun is fitted up with seats, and is a favourite place for the British officers to go for a quiet noontide sleep.

A CURIOUS industry in some of the provinces of China is the manufacture of mock money for offering to the dead. The pieces are only half the size of the real coins, but the dead are supposed not to know the difference. To make them, tin, hammered out till it is not thicker than the thinnest paper, is punched to the size required, and pasted on discs of cardboard.

ONE of the most recent, as it is the most novel, of the applications of Prof. Röntgen's discovery has been made in the Museum of Natural History at Vienna. The museum contains an Egyptian mummy, which is human in form, but which, from the inscription on it, was taken to be that of an ibis. It was taken to the School of Photography and examined by being photographed by the "X" rays. The picture obtained shows the outlines of a large bird skeleton.

A WELSH engineer has suggested the sinking of a shaft 12,000 or 15,000 feet into the earth for the purpose of utilising the central heat of the globe. It is said that such a depth is by no means impossible, with the improved machinery and advanced methods of the coming engineer. Water at a temperature of 200 deg. Centigrade, which can, it is said, be obtained from these deep borings, would not only heat houses and public buildings, but would furnish power that could be utilised for many purposes.

PIERCING glass with holes without breaking it has always been a matter of more or less difficulty. Many ways have been tried, among which are rapidly-rotating brass tubes filled with water and emery. This answers for thick plates, while thinner ones may be pierced with holes by pressing a disk of wet clay upon the glass, and making a hole through the clay of the width desired, so that the glass is laid bare. Then molten lead is poured into the hole, and the lead and glass fall out at once. The quick local heating of the glass causes a circular crack, the outline of which corresponds to the shape of the hole made in the clay.

THANKS to the investigations of our modern Egyptologists, the Egyptian temples, pyramids and tombs, statues, inscriptions and pictorial representations have at last yielded up their secret, and enable us to assert, without hesitation, that in the far remote period of four thousand years, in the land of the Pharaohs, the game of draughts was a favourite amusement in the houses of the poor and the mansions of the rich. From these monumental records and pictorial representations we learn what the daily domestic life, amusements, manners and customs of the ancient Egyptians were. The Egyptians of to-day call their game *Dameh*, and play it very much in the same way as we play ours.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

STEPHANIE.—Not in book-form.

W. H. Y.—It is a London hospital.

OLD READER.—None of them in book form.

J. T.—The threat addressed to you is a real one.

CAPITALIST.—One hundred pounds would be too small a capital.

BRIDE.—The rule is that the husband should furnish the house.

ANXIOUS ENQUIRER.—Not until there is proof of the wife's death.

BOB ACRES.—The coin you speak of is not rare, and of no special value.

OLIVE.—It may not have been registered, and in that case is in private hands.

CURIOSITY.—We cannot suggest any way of obtaining the desired information.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—We unhesitatingly pronounce against the marriage.

A. V.—We should advise your taking the articles to an expert, who on seeing them can advise.

BRUNT.—If you wish to get an engagement on board a private yacht you must apply to the owner.

L. O. U.—It is not necessary to have a stamp of any kind upon an I.O.U.; your security is all right.

ONE IN A FILL.—You owe your master an apology, and you ought to be upright enough to make it.

GREYLOCK.—You will have to wait until your hair grows its natural colour. You were very foolish to bleach it.

IGNORANT.—A "grass widow" is a woman living apart from her husband—literally a "grass widow," or one by courtesy.

EXCELSION.—Write Government Emigrants' Information Office, 21, Broadway, London, S.W., for latest trade reports from the colonies.

MYRNE.—Dogs and cats are frequently so afflicted, and are often very appreciative of those who relieve them by extracting the offending members.

WILLIE.—There is no limit or hours stated in the Education Act; parents must influence the Board on the point, if teachers are too exacting.

J. M. W.—If your agreement is for so much weekly, then whether paid monthly or quarterly you will have to give it for every week in the period.

RAVENHURST.—Assuredly there is a duty upon legacies; if you like to look into Willaker's Almanack you will find the whole matter stated there.

SPOTTED DICK.—Rusty nail water will help to remove freckles. Put a few of such nails in a bottle of water, and lave the face with the water night and morning.

BRIDGE.—There is a very great deal of work about such cooking, and the fowls do just as well without it there is certain little reason for taking so much trouble.

FATHREAD.—A man can take out a policy on his life in favour of anyone he thinks fit, or taking it out in general terms may afterwards assign to a special individual.

YOUNGSTER.—The only way is by application in answer to advertisements and showing specimens of your work or giving testimonials; those possessing any friends cannot do more.

MEDICO.—The attainments necessary to qualify are very high—higher than either in the law or the Church. We should advise you to consult some judicious friend on the subject.

WALLACE.—The City of London is older than that of Edinburgh; the former being in existence before the invasion of the Romans, while the latter was founded by the Saxons in the eighth century.

ONE WHO THINKS.—At thirteen years of age you are quite incapable of deciding the matter of religious belief for yourself; you do not see this meanwhile, but that is just because your mind is no older than your body.

SOUTH LONDONER.—The Elephant and Castle was a noted stage-coach house until the railway times, and was originally a low-built roadside inn, with an outer gallery, a drawing of which hangs in the present tavern.

BRITON.—The "three crowns on the Union Jack" (there are really only two) are the crosses of St. Andrew (Scotland), St. George (England) and St. Patrick (Ireland); the last named are smaller, and blend upon the other.

MAJOR.—You are legally your own master; if it seems desirable you can seek lodgings elsewhere than in your father's house; and, as regards your wages, the employer who paid them over to anyone except yourself would be legally bound to pay them over to you upon demand.

STATISTICIAN.—Generally, taking the entire world, it is said that married people live longer than single, and those who have to work hard for their living longer than those who do not; while among the average rate of longevity is higher among civilised than uncivilised races. Further, people of large physique live longer than those of small, but those of middle size beat both.

JIM.—You are by right of law entitled to at least a week's wages; possibly, if the case were inquired into, you might establish a good claim for damages as well, your long illness having been brought upon you by exposure in fulfilling your duties.

H. O. G.—The word "pig" as applied to iron is a mere play on the word "sow." When iron is melted it runs off into a channel called a "sow," the lateral branches of which are called the "pigs." Here, the iron cools, and is called "pig-iron."

BALLOW.—The one way to keep a fresh complexion is to be out as much as possible in the pure fresh air, to bathe regularly every morning, use wholesome foods only, avoid stimulants of every kind, keep early hours, and see that your bedroom is well-ventilated.

EMMA.—Mix a quart of flour to a thick batter with cold water, add a teaspoonful of salt, and beat the batter until it is full of air bubbles; then bake it at once in buttered gem pans. The operation must be very quickly accomplished to be successful.

BRAND AND BETTIE MISS.—Suppose you try to content yourself with school until you are fifteen, then go into the world to take up a business career. During the next three years try to learn everything that will be of use in your future occupation, and make yourself familiar with business methods.

L. P.—There is only one way in which the comprehensive information you desire could be obtained—that is by getting for 1s. 6d. from Messrs. Eyre and Spottiswoode, Parliamentary printers, East Harding-street, Fleet-street, London, copy of a report of the Inspector-General of Police in England; that gives the average height of all the forces in England.

A KING'S DEFEAT.

Long had King Winter ruled the land
With all his Northern forces,
The forests bowed at his command,
He stayed the rivers' courses;
He bound the lakes in iron chains,
He slew the flower of tender,
His cohorts white camped on the plains
And hills in glistering splendour.

For butterflies or birds or bees
His heart knew naught of pity;
The swallows sought beyond the seas
New homes in sunny cities;
The brown bees hid far from his view,
He stilled the larks and thrushes;
The erstwhile merry blackbirds flew
In dread through the leafless bushes.

But 'gainst the tyrant and his might
A gallant band and daring,
In serried lines, in armour bright,
Rose gleaming banners bearing
And birds now tell in bursts of song,
In joyous utterances,
How winter fled before the throng
Of shining crescent-lances!

M. R.

KATE.—They may be kept bright by leaving them once a week in strong borax water for several hours. The water should be nearly boiling when the silver is added to it.

A. C.—Six large, ripe tomatoes. Skin and cut into small pieces. Spread a layer in the bottom of the baking-dish, season well, put a layer of coarse bread-crumbs over the tomatoes with plenty of butter. Continue this until the dish is full, having bread-crumbs on the top. Bake one hour.

LADY CLARE.—Silk underwear and silk hosiery should be washed in warm water, and only the best white unscented castile soap used. Hosiery should never be ironed, especially silk, but pulled into shape. Fancy hosiery should be washed on the wrong side, in lukewarm water, and soap free from acids; then rinsed in clear cold water and dried in a heated place.

CONSTANTINE.—The resemblance between the Venetian gondola and the Turkish *klak* is so strong as to make it certain that they have a common origin. Take from the gondola the "false" or hood, and the retracted stem, and the remainder is practically the *klak*. It is of all craft of its size the swiftest, the most easy to handle, and the most comfortable, and as a general thing the Turks are admitted to be the best carmen in Europe.

DIETRIKE.—You give no idea as to material. Some coloured woollens will bear the stain to be washed out with hot soapy water, in which, according to the fastness of the dye, more or less chloride water has been added, then rinsed in water containing a little ammonia; next dipped in a solution of hyposulphite of soda, and then in a solution of tannic acid, and finally washed in hot water. It would need a practised hand to carry out the programme with success.

POOR LITTLE DOROTHY.—Yours is only a too common complaint. How can I improve my complexion without injuring the skin? you ask. The best thing so far that has been brought under our notice is Dr. Mackenzie's Arsenical Toilet Soap. It is made from the purest ingredients, will not harm the most delicate skin, and is guaranteed absolutely harmless. Ladies of rank and fashion are known to have testified to its beneficial effects. It can be obtained of S. Harvey, 5, Denman-street, London-bridge, price one shilling per cake, or three cakes for 2s. 6d., postage three pence extra.

M. M.—Lending-strings are strings by which children are supported when beginning to walk; thus to be in lending-strings, as applied to an adult, is to be in a state of infancy or dependence.

YOUNG WIFE.—Peel and parboil in salted water, take from the fire and drain dry. Brush each potato over with beaten yolk of egg, roll in hot crumbs, drop into hot lard, and fry a golden brown. Drain dry, and serve as a garnish to chops or steaks.

NAT.—Wash a cupful of rice. Have two tablespoonfuls of butter over the fire in a frying pan, and when very hot stir the rice in it. Stir it continuously until it is a golden brown, when add to it a cupful of tomatoes. Stir it well, cover and let it cool gently until the rice is tender. Add salt and a little pepper.

BLUES.—Take a quart of green gooseberries and boil them with one pound of coarse brown sugar in three-quarters of a pint of brown vinegar till partly cooked, then place in a jar. Add one pound of steamed and chopped raisins, three ounces of garlic, pounded and dried, three ounces of mustard seed, bruised, and one ounce of pounded shallots. Place the jar in a cool oven for several hours a day for four consecutive days, and after it the contents appear too dry, add a little vinegar. Stir the contents of the jar each day before placing it in the oven again.

MAID.—Four half a gallon of water over one pound of quassa chips, allowing it to stand all night, and then boil the strained fluid down to one quart. The wood must be again boiled with one quart of water, until one pint remains, when the two infusions are mixed together, and from half to three-quarters of a pound of sugar dissolved in it. The paper is now passed through the fluid, drained and hung up to dry. Blotting paper of any colour may be used, and a small bit of it placed in a saucer of water will prove a very efficient destroyer of the pest.

HIGHLANDER.—The killed regiments in the British Army are nine in number, the forty-second and seventy-third (linked), the seventy-second and seventy-eighth (linked), seventy-ninth, the ninety-first and ninety-third (linked), the ninety-second and seventy-fifth (linked); mere number of "honours" counts for very little, for while regiments engaged in recent wars, in which battles were frequent and fatal, those which were out in more remote military operations have "honours" for every battle they took part in; the linking of Highland regiments has made it impossible now to ascertain their honours accurately.

MAY BLOSSOM.—One teaspoon butter, two teaspoons sugar, three teaspoons flour, one teaspoon milk, one teaspoon baking powder, one teaspoon essence of lemon, two ounces currants, three eggs; put butter and sugar into a basin, and with a wooden spoon beat them till they are the thickness of cream; then add the eggs very well beaten, and mix in thoroughly, after which add the milk. Mix the baking powder with the flour and add it next, then the essence, and beat the whole thoroughly. Line a flat cake tin or roasting pan with buttered paper, sprinkle over the currants, well-washed, dried and picked. Pour in the mixture and bake for about an hour. Ice over the top, and cut into squares.

CHEESE.—Five ounces brown bread crumbs, three eggs, four ounces sugar, one tea cupful milk, two tablespoonfuls cream, two ounces cherries, half teaspoonful vanilla. Put butter and sugar in a basin and beat them till like cream. Then add the yolks of the eggs, then the milk and the bread crumbs. Beat all very well. Stir in at last the whites of the eggs very well beaten, the vanilla and cherries cut up in very small pieces. Reserve six of the cherries to decorate the mould. Take a plain pudding mould—butter it carefully and dust it over with the sugar, and decorate with the cherries reserved. Pour in the pudding, cover with buttered paper, and steam for one hour.

AMBITION.—The interior of Muscat is particularly gloomy, the bazars are narrow and dirty, and scented over with palm matting. They offer but little of interest, and if you are fond of the Arabian sweetmeats called *halwa* it is just as well not to watch it being made there, for niggers' feet are usually employed to stir it, and the knowledge of this is apt to spoil the flavour. Most of Muscat is now in ruins. Fifty years ago the population must have been nearly three times greater than it is now. There is also wanting in the town the feature which makes most Moslem towns picturesque—namely, the minaret. The mosques of the Ibadhite sect are squalid and uninteresting. At first it is difficult to recognize them from the courtyard of an ordinary house, but by degrees the eye gets trained to identify a mosque by the tiny substitute for a minaret attached to each—namely, a sort of bell-shaped cone about four feet high, which is placed above one corner of the inclosed wall.

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ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

†† We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

WHERE THE COOK GOT HIS DINNER.

We know a cook who works in a big London hotel. He is a genius in his line, and, like other geniuses, he can produce wonderful effects with the most simple means. With a little fish, some good beef, and a few vegetables, he can get up a better dinner than a less gifted person could with the resources of a whole market. And he can make astonishing dishes with tongue-twisting French names. Goodness knows what he puts into them; he leaves other people to enjoy the product of his talents. He says that when he wants a really good dinner he goes to the little suburban house where his old mother lives, and she prepares it; her cookery is plain and simple, yet her son delights in it. His friends think he is an odd man.

We also know a baker at Horsepath, Wheatley, near Oxford. From his ovens come the lightest of bread and the most tempting of rolls and buns. For years this baker has done a brisk trade, yet could not even look upon his own wholesome wares without a shudder; he could not have turned more decidedly from rank poison. Indeed, his bread was poison to him, and not owing to any fault of his either.

"Eight years ago," he says, "I began to be troubled with my stomach. At first I had a bad taste in the mouth, and after meals had pain at my chest and side. I was also troubled with wind, and had a gnawing, craving feeling at my stomach as if wanting food, which, when put before me, I could not touch. I kept on with my work, but was seldom free from pain. At last I began to take a medicine that had benefited my mother, called Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. After taking it a short time I found relief, and soon the indigestion left me. If any of us ail anything a few doses of the medicine put us all right. You may make what use you wish of this statement. (Signed) W. Surman (baker), Horsepath, Wheatley, near Oxford, June 16th, 1893."

So long as the human race is tormented by such an evil as this the remedy named by Mr. Surman will be needed.

"In the autumn of 1890," writes a lady, "I fell into a low, weak state. My appetite was very poor, and after eating I had pain and tightness at the chest and sides, also pain in the back. My food, however light and simple, gave me so much pain that I was almost afraid to eat, and I got into a very weak state. I took different kinds of medicines, but nothing did me any

good. After suffering two years I read of a medicine called Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. I got a bottle, and after taking it a short time, all pain and distress left me, I could digest my food, and soon got as strong as ever. In the spring of 1891 my husband was troubled with severe indigestion which nothing relieved. Seeing the great benefit I had derived from Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup he commenced taking it, with the same happy result as in my own case. If any of us ail anything a few doses of the medicine soon set us right. You may make what use you like of this statement. (Signed) (Mrs.) Emma Butler, White Swan Inn, Pleasley Hill, near Nottingham, June 6th, 1893."

The lady is quite right in calling such a result a happy one; and there are many who, on reading how she was cured, will thank her for allowing the facts to be published. The complaint from which she suffered—indigestion and dyspepsia—is dreadfully prevalent, and until the discovery of Mother Seigel's Syrup nothing seemed able to cure it. Thousands—yes, millions—whose health might have been restored, and their lives made long and useful, pined and sank into untimely graves through the power of it.

Yes, indeed. And if we may say so, the worst of this disease is that it is so deceptive—it is such a cheat. How? do you ask me? Well, I'll tell you.

It is this way. People have all sorts of pains—in the chest, in the head, in the arms and legs—all over, in fact. They have heart palpitation, they have a bad cough that looks like consumption, they spit up phlegm, they get weak and thin, they get nervous and fidgety and can't sleep o' nights, they have chills with a fever to follow, they have what is called liver complaint or kidney trouble. The skin and eyes go yellow, and they feel shivery, downhearted, and miserable. And so it goes in fifty directions. And they fancy they have as many different ailments, and dose themselves on that theory.

But, as a matter of fact, all these complaints, with all variations of them, are results, and therefore symptoms, of one real disease, and only one—indigestion and dyspepsia. And that you can cure with Mother Seigel's Syrup. Then all the rest fly away like crows when you fire a gun into the flock.

You may save yourself a lot of suffering by remembering what I tell you, and acting on it.